Celebrations For Children



The Complete Guide to Organizing and Celebrating Eucharistic Liturgies For Children

by Fred Thompson



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Introduction

When I was a child learning my "religion" from the Baltimore Catechism I was always somewhat distressed that Mass was an unbloody remembrance of the sacrifice of the cross. It seemed contradictory to me that God wanted us to start off Sunday, otherwise a happy day, with a remembrance of the sad day on which Jesus died. But I was still a child and thought like a child, never questioning what "they" said. I attended faithfully, albeit fearfully, afraid of going to hell if I didn't, or even worse, having to tell the priest that I'd missed.

I never changed my patterns or thoughts about Mass until a few years after Vatican II. Even though I was in my late twenties by this time my primary fears of hell and priest remained. Then something moved me, (now I believe it was the Spirit; then I thought it was a need to do something different) to volunteer to teach CCD. One of the first lessons that I had to teach was on the Eucharist. I was astounded that I was talking about the Mass as a celebration rather than an unbloody sacrifice. (I guess I didn't pay much attention to the sermons around the time of Vatican II because this was the first time I heard of Mass and celebration being synonymous.)

About this time my own children were old enough so that we could no longer drop them off at the nursery while my wife and I attended Mass. Watching them and the students from my fifth-grade CCD class, I began to realize that much of what I was teaching about celebration and happy meal bore no resemblance to what was going on at the altar for those kids. But they were still children and thought like children—now they are no longer children and many of them are no longer bored by Mass.

Perhaps by this time I was a man and thinking like a man; most likely someone else explained it well enough to impress me, and I started accepting the Mass as a sacred meal and celebration. Regular meal time is a celebration to me. I enjoy sharing food with the family and friends. I became very comfortable with the idea that the Mass could be a meal and a celebration. The Eucharist is the food that keeps us going and to be able to celebrate with friends and receive the Eucharist is cause for great joy.

I believe in the combination of celebration and sacred meal so strongly that I lose fulfillment when there's a party-pooper in the congregation. This loss occurs when a significant part of the congregation is bored by the celebration and not willing to respond to the prayers or songs or spirit. I can easily accept a few bores or deadheads at any party; they're the ones who suffer by attending a function they don't enjoy but when they're a majority, I find myself distraited. Fulfillment is even harder when the celebrant is the party-pooper. He is much like the host, and an unprepared host throws very few good parties.

My personal maturity has reached the point where fear of hell or telling the priest no longer enters my mind. Most priests do their jobs adequately and most congregations don't have that many party spoilers. But teaching the children that the Eucharist is a meal and celebration and watching most of them sitting bored through an adult liturgy distresses me. I wish I knew the answer how to have their (and adult) hearts burning within them.

I *think* that the answer is to take a great big bowl and add the right mixture of people who are comfortable with one another, who like one another, a happy mood, a comfortable place with a relaxed atmosphere, a message presented in a way that people will remember it, some music people know and like, a recognition that God is present, that He is the source of our strength,

especially through Christ's body, and that we come together to celebrate that presence and receive that strength. Finding the exact mixture, however, is a severe problem.

Perhaps my infatuation with dinner is the primary cause of a recognition in my brain that many of the ingredients necessary for my enjoyment of dinner (people, atmosphere, meal) are similar to ingredients necessary for good liturgy. It is from this recognition that the "Cookbook" analogy for the following material originated.

The inclusion of children's liturgies as part of my life comes from another background. While I had concern that children are too frequently ignored within the normal liturgy, I wasn't motivated to try to do something about it. Chronologically my involvement with children's liturgies goes like this—

One rainy Tuesday night when there was nothing better planned than watching television, I suggested to my wife that we attend the small group parish meeting for any concerns of parishioners. I had no concerns, just a little curiosity and nothing more interesting to do. A discussion began on the need for occasional liturgies geared for children. I was interested but not too involved in the discussion. Concurrently, although I didn't know it, there were several parent requests to the CCD coordinator along the same lines and he had approached the Liturgy Committee who accepted the idea if someone would do the work.

The very wise parish council representative conducting the meeting asked those raising the issue if *they* would be willing to *work* along with any program for children's liturgies. My wife, who is always quick to volunteer, did so, and somehow my name also got onto this list of four or five which was turned over to the CCD coordinator.

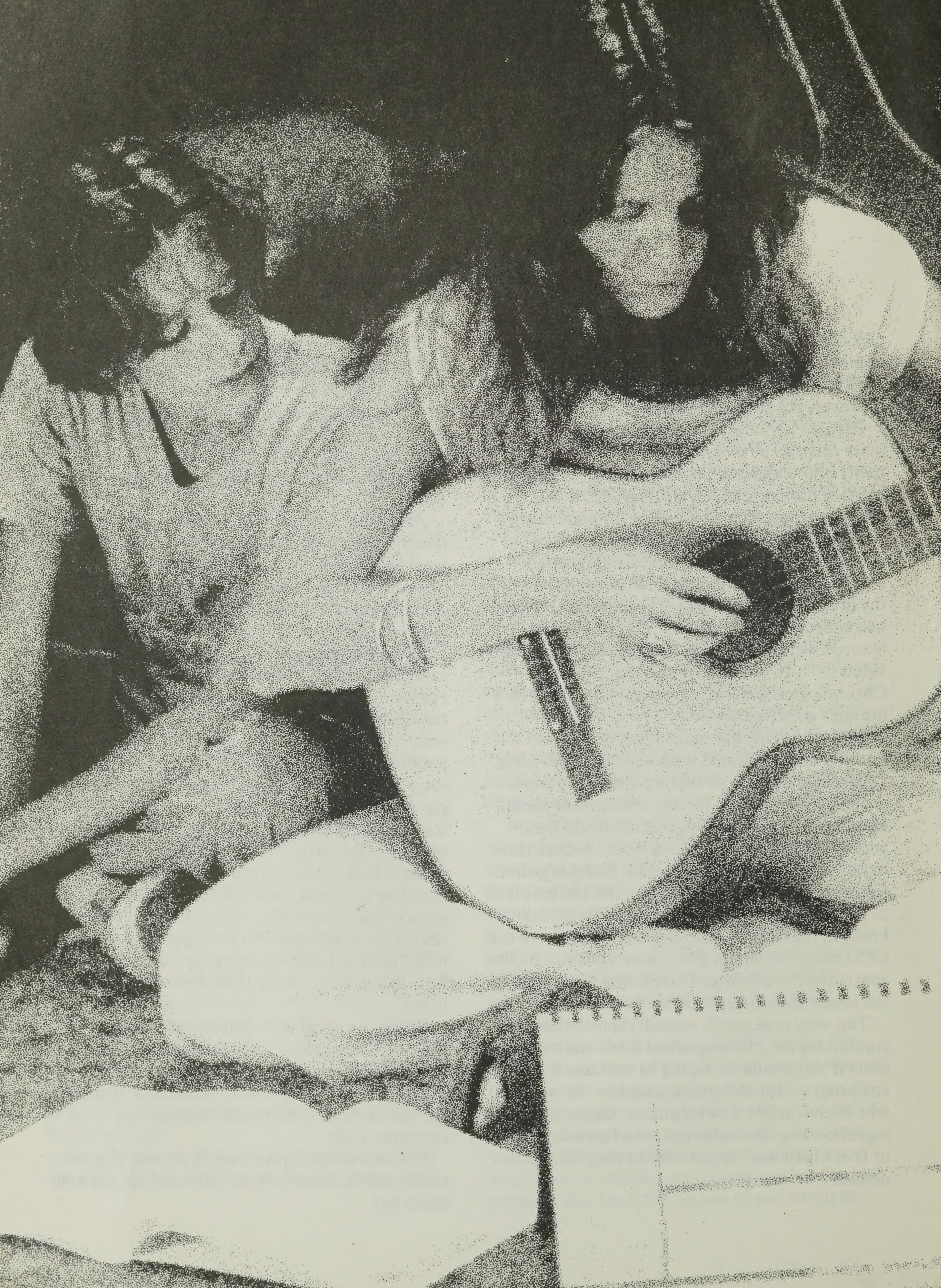
The CCD coordinator knew only one person on the list and asked him to organize a program. And so I became involved.

We did some research and got into action very quickly. Soon we were promoting, with varying degrees of success, liturgies every other week during the school year. We are now in our fourth year.

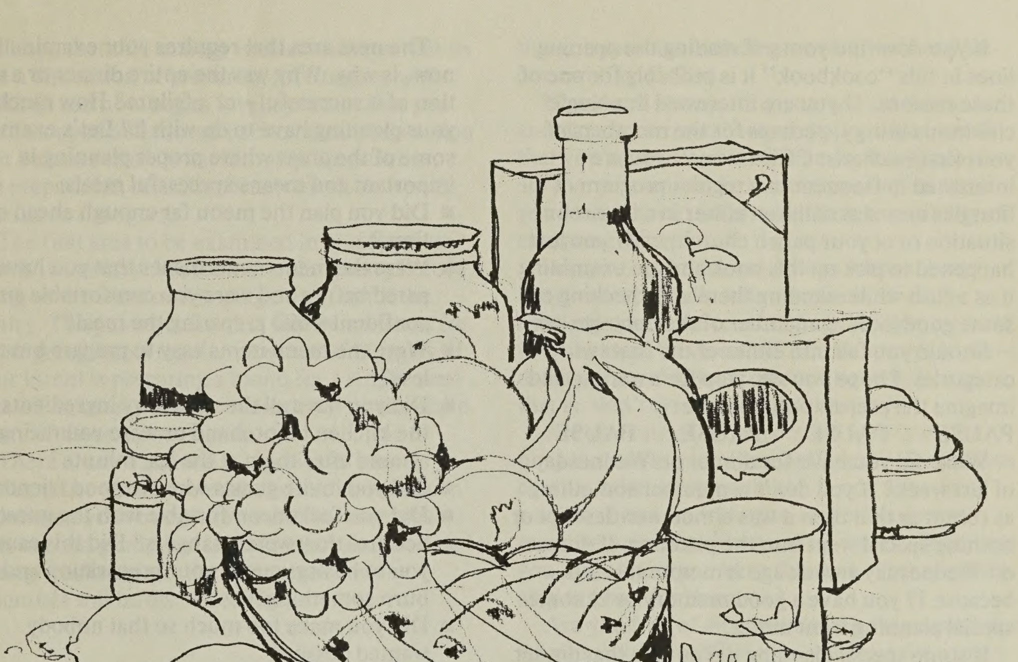
After about a year of this involvement, my daughter was preparing for Confirmation. We were having an unplanned discussion about God. She said that she could understand the manifestation of God as Father and Son but didn't know who the Spirit is or how He acts. I responded that I couldn't simply define the Spirit either but I know that He exists and that one of His roles is to constantly, but subtly, work on us to positively respond to God's call. I described experiences where I believe the Spirit tapped me on the shoulder directing me into working with children's liturgies, starting with the coincidence that got me into CCD at a much younger grade level than I wanted through a lousy night for television one rainy Tuesday. I had to add that the Spirit doesn't blow a bugle in our ear to attract our attention but does it naturally and subtly and sometimes we don't hear Him at all and we don't always get it right the first time and even after we hear Him He doesn't necessarily make it easy. But He keeps at us even if we keep refusing to listen.

When my daughter listened intently and honestly and seemed to understand my bumbling, rambling answer, I shivered with the realization that I might have been the instrument for one of those subtle bugle blasts in my daughter's life.

It's time to open your ears. Is there a little horn telling you to become involved with liturgies with children?



Chapter 1
ORGANIZATION



Stocking the pantry

If you now find yourself reading the opening lines in this "cookbook" it is probably for one of these reasons: 1) you are interested in a single children's liturgy, perhaps for the members of your first Eucharist CCD class; 2) you are interested in frequent or a regular program of liturgies aimed at children either in a classroom situation or at your parish church; or 3) you just happened to pick up this book and are examining it as a ruse while standing there and checking out some good looking member of the opposite sex.

Should you fall into either of the first two categories, I hope you will stop for a minute and imagine the preparation of dinner.

PAUSE PAUSE PAUSE PAUSE

What did you have for dinner on Wednesday of last week? If you don't remember something as recent as that then it was either nondescript or nothing special went into the planning. If dinner on Wednesday a week ago *is* memorable it is because 1) you have a good memory or 2) some special planning went into it.

If some special planning did go into that dinner think of the successes and failures—and if last Wednesday isn't a good example, pick some other planned dinner. Was the dinner an absolutely perfect evening where everything from soup to nuts to company went off perfectly? Was the dinner perfect because of your terrific planning and the meal great because of your superb cooking but the company boring? Was the dinner quite good . . . except for the Caesar salad? Was the dinner a disaster food-wise but a happy experience anyhow because it was shared by good friends?

The next area that requires your examination now, is why. Why was the entire dinner or a portion of it successful—or a failure? How much did your planning have to do with it? Let's examine some of the areas where proper planning is important and means successful meals:

- Did you plan the menu far enough ahead of time?
- Were the menu items dishes that you have prepared before and were you comfortable and confident while preparing the meal?
- Were the menu items easy to prepare but tasteless?
- Did you have all the necessary ingredients in the kitchen beforehand or were you racing around after them at the last minute?
- Did you invite guests who are good friends?
- Did you feel uncomfortable with the guests because they were strangers? Did this cause you to be nervous in your preparation and burn something?
- Did you make too much so that nobody wanted dessert?
- Did you make anything that you liked because you liked it even though you knew your guests didn't like it?
- Was your entire dinner destroyed because one simple thing didn't go right?
- Did you prepare too many exotic or new dishes so that you simply couldn't control everything during the preparation stage?
- Did you worry so much about everything going right that you didn't sit down and enjoy the meal and the company?
- Were your guests able to relax and enjoy the meal?

I hope that this analogy is clear and apparent so that a discussion of preparing for liturgies with children can now begin. It is important that you have stopped and thought about meal preparation first because that's what liturgy preparation is, the preparation of an important meal, be it with friends or strangers.

The first area to be examined in meal preparation is the pantry. We look into the pantry before going to the store and buying things to fill the pantry. The pantry items that follow are items for those going into a regular program of liturgies. If your intent is preparing a menu for a single meal you will mentally need to scale down or eliminate many of these pantry items.

There are two general categories of pantry items, those which are essential and those which depend on your budget or available resources. This second group is classified luxuries. Because I strongly believe in orderly arrangement the essentials will be discussed first.

Essential # 1

YOU!

Don't look over your shoulder—it's YOU. You, the person who recognizes that liturgy aimed particularly at children is an important thing, important to their growth toward and understanding of God.

Now don't start patting yourself on the back and dancing around because you've discovered that you're essential numero uno. It is appropriate that you stop and examine yourself to see if you really should undertake the responsibility of assuming this role . . .

Are you one of those persons who is always busy *and* repeatedly tells people about all the meetings you have to attend and things you have to do by next Wednesday? (If the answer is yes—don't get involved with more than one liturgy, that is, don't do it on a regular basis.)

Are you one of those persons who is always busy but works quietly and efficiently (regardless of what other people think)? (Look at yourself and see if you are willing to make this commitment because it means another responsibility and you must ask if you have the time. You are probably the best for this role.)

Are you free of all other church responsibilities (except going) and feel that you have time to do this? (Do it, but not yet, get involved in a parish committee or CCD for a year or so first and then reevaluate.)

Are you one of those persons who thinks "anything Father wants to do is all right with me"? (Be happy, continue to work with Father, but give this book to Father.)

Are you one of those persons who thinks that Father must do whatever you say regardless of Father's feelings? (Please reexamine your expectations before going on—if you reexamine and can't change, forget it and save yourself and Father much heartbreak.)

Do you have a sense of humor? (If not forget it and expend your energies researching deep theological issues.)

Are you imaginative, creative, artistic, musically inclined and talented? (That's very nice but really not necessary.)

Do you ever watch children at Mass? Are they usually happy or bored? (If you answer happy, thank God for your parish staff.)

Do you like kids, not necessarily love them? Even the brats? (If you don't like them, kids will know and will be uncomfortable with you.)

Do you have at least a little common sense? Are you willing to fight *a little?* Are you willing to lose once in a while? Are you willing to take the responsibility for a bad meal—even if it wasn't your fault? Are you willing to be responsible for an occasional bad meal that is your fault? Are you willing to accept some people laughing *at* (not *with*) you once in a while? Can you take criticism? Are you willing to accept another's idea, even though it is inferior to your own, because that other person is valuable?

If you have problems with any of these, consider not putting yourself on the pantry shelf.

You're really not looking for anything else in the way of *essentials* needed for successful liturgies are you? You already have the essential—remember you elected to put yourself on the pantry shelf—EVERYTHING else is a luxury.

So, think about luxuries for awhile. I'll try to list some order of importance here too, even though there will be overlapping and changes in priorities depending on what you are doing at a particular time.

Luxury #1

Someone else.

Someone else gives you and the someone else the opportunity to bang your ideas off an intelligent human being rather than just off a wall. (There are times when you won't consider that someone else a human being much less intelligent.) Working productively together has a geometric value (two people working together have a value of four people working separately) and working together unproductively has an inverse value (two people then have the value of half a person). You'll do both productive and unproductive work at different times, but at least you'll have someone to commiserate with when the going gets rough.

Luxury #2

"A Bag of Noodles," Wally Armbruster, Manufacturer, from Concordia Publishing House, 1972.

This very inexpensive book never discusses liturgy and may never be used in a children's liturgy. It is, however, a philosophy—a simple, direct and probing book that can change your way of life. If you find yourself in general agreement with the manufacturer, I believe you can lead toward successful liturgies for children.

Luxury #3

A library card.

The public library contains tremendous support. Libraries have books, music, some filmstrips and movies, and generally friendly and helpful people called librarians. It is the most valuable outside resource—and if you don't lose the books, the cheapest.

Luxury #4

Permission.

Permission consists of a priest willing to celebrate the liturgy and a pastor willing to permit it. If you don't find this willingness (after at least a little fight) in your own parish, find another parish. I don't make this last statement lightly. Your faith and worship are important—the most important things in your life. If some personal conflict with a priest is getting in your way and you are unable to resolve this between yourself and that priest, find another priest who helps your faith and worship . . . and remember that the troublesome priest will eventually be transferred somewhere else.

(I really don't want to digress here but it is important that we recognize we might have personal difficulties with a particular priest . . . that we recognize this isn't necessarily a reflection on the holiness or degree of faith of either us or the priest, simply a philosophical difference or a personality clash . . . that we may not be able to work our differences out—of course, we must try . . . that because of these problems, attending a liturgy where this priest is the celebrant may interfere with our proper worship—and that is a fault on our part . . . that it can be better to go somewhere else for our worship . . . that it is not better to not go anywhere to worship.)

This item that I have listed as luxury number 4 is probably out of place and is really an essential. I didn't want to include it there because I want to stress how important YOU are.

Luxury #5

Media.

Media is available from such places as the school, CCD or adult education office, your friend Tom, Tom's friend Larry, etc. It's usually a matter of being able to find it, receiving permission for its use, and returning it. HINT: Usually if you mistreat it you'll find it difficult to borrow a second time.

Put a note on the shelf of your pantry that tells you where to find the following media items:

a) Microphones. Unless you have a very small room, a microphone(s) is an absolute necessity. When in use, it is also important to turn microphones on and to talk into them.
b) Overhead projector. This is the thing that you plug in, turn on and it projects a bright light onto a screen or blank wall; add a transparency with something on it and listen to the people go "ooh" and "ahh." (The transparency is the catch.)
c) Record player. If you don't know what this is ask any teenager.
d) Slide projector. This is the thing that your former friend has (former since the time you got stuck for four hours one night seeing his slides of the family trip to Disneyland, etc.)
e) Filmstrip Projector. This is pretty far down on the list because unedited filmstrips generally are too long for a children's liturgy.

Luxury #6

Music.

Many children's liturgy resources seem to make music the number one pantry item. I don't agree with them. Regardless of how good Carey Landry and Jack Miffleton music is (and it is truly good) it is only a *part* of the liturgy. You might be in the position where the only available music is old Mrs. Agnew playing loudly on the organ. If that's all you have, work with it!

If you are sponsoring children's liturgies on a regular basis it would be best if the music persons do not include you and luxury number one. By itself, music requires a great deal of work and practice time.

Since this is a discussion of luxuries, look for a group to do these liturgies only. You might find some talented musicians willing to work on a less frequent basis and it is an imposition to ask another group to double up regularly.

If you aren't finding guitarists (we seem to assume that children's liturgies require guitars), look for a piano player (and a piano). Actually piano music works great *with* guitars too.

If you don't have anyone besides old Mrs. Agnew, use the organ and some of the more fitting organ music (appropriate organ music really is quite good) and fill in with a record at Offertory or Communion.

In trying not to make music "the most important item," I may seem to be understating its importance. That implication would be a major mistake. MUSIC IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT . . . but don't get lost or stop there.

Luxury #7

Other books on children's liturgies.

This really is getting into luxury.

In our experiences of preparing liturgies we found no literature satisfactory for doing the job for us—you're not going to escape having to do the job yourselves—but we really didn't start with many original ideas, they came from modifying something from another source.

Aside from the library, books are available at religious bookstores. (I expect that the library is the source of all nonreligious publishing house works.) By absolutely no means can you limit your search to Catholic bookstores even if you're fortunate enough to have one in your neighborhood; the other Christian religions have similar problems with attention and worship of children at liturgies and they might be doing a better job solving them.

Here are some of the worthwhile materials of which I am aware. Be mindful that this list only scratches the surface of available material:

"Joy" series of Winston Press. This is a CCD text and contains supplemental stories, suggestions for crafts and related activities. If your parish CCD program uses "Joy" look for others, particularly those stressing supplemental activities.

"Skits, Plays and Projects for Youth Ministries," copyright 1975 by Success with Youth Publications Inc. (We found it in a Baptist bookstore.)

"Celebration," a communion preparation kit from Winston Press, Inc., copyright 1972.

"Walking Together Again," a kit for under-

standing the Sacrament of Penance by Mine Publications, Inc. copyright 1970.
The "Ideas" series (also from the Baptist bookstore), a continuing series copyrighted by Youth Specialties, San Diego, California.
Twenty-Third Publications' magazines "Today's Parish" and "Religion Teacher's Journal."
"Noodles du Jour," Wally Armbruster, Manufacturer, copyright 1976 by Concordia Publishing House.
Lavern G. Franzen's books "Smile! Jesus is Lord," 1975 and "Good News from Luke," 1976, both from Augsburg Publishing House.
"Run With Him" by Sister Janet Marie Bucher, 1974, from North American Liturgy Resources.

There are many others particularly aimed at children's liturgy and your personal library depends on available financial resources. I certainly recommend occasional purchases.

Don't forget to check such places as the school library, CCD offices, adult ed office and each priest's private collection of books before buying anything.

And don't accept any book, except the Bible, as a gospel for your philosophy or activities. You are a better judge of your congregation than some author in Salem, Oregon or Baltimore, Maryland.

I hope you've already skipped to the next sections of this book since this is well into the "luxury" area.

Luxury #8

A third person.

Remember the geometry lesson, 3 people working *together* equal 9 people working independently. And 3 not working together, and that means *all* 3, equal one-third of a person working regularly.

Luxury #9

A fourth person.

This is probably the upper limit of a workable group. More than this and you have a committee and committees require an awful lot of talk to produce anything.

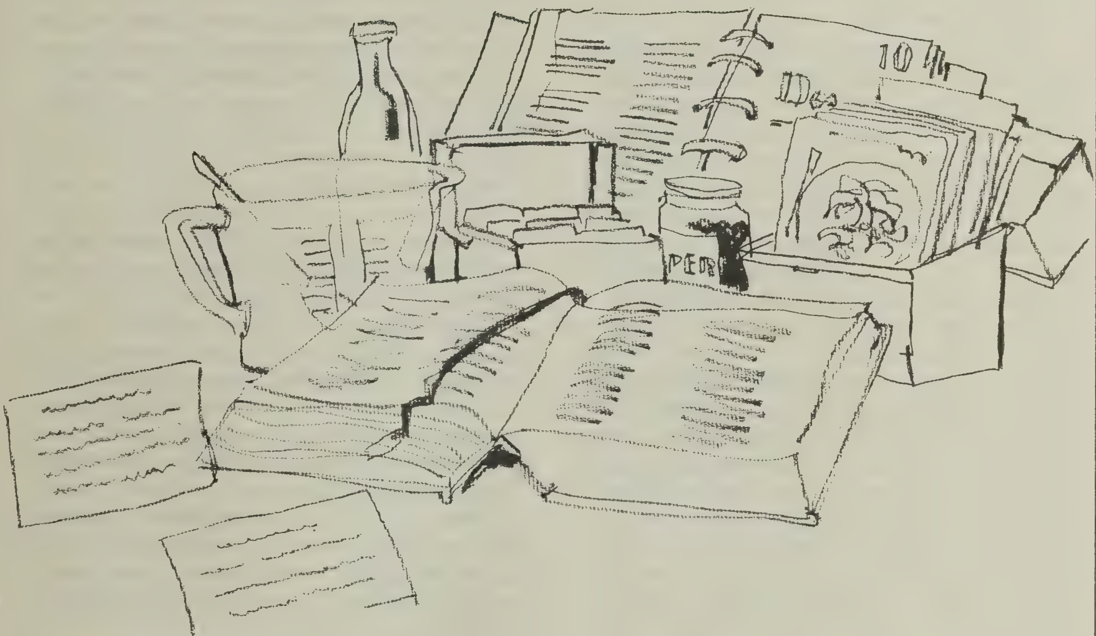
Luxury #10

An availability of other talent.

This means that there are people who will do things as requested, such as making a banner, participating in a skit, finding an available tree, but who are not full-time helpers. I was amazed at how much available talent there can be as long as you are asking people to do one particular thing for only one occasion. It is imperative that you explain you are requesting for one time only. It is also necessary to ask directly. It is also important that you recognize some people will say "no" and that this does not discourage you forever.



Chapter 2
PREPARATION



Meal planning

Here you are! You've just finished stocking the pantry and you're raring to go.

What's next?

Just a few simple things like:

Getting to know your kitchen or

1. The Celebrant

You may look quizically at the words "the celebrant" and wonder why they're mentioned. You may wonder because you are or have a celebrant who is a part of the team initiating regular children's liturgies; one who is actually and totally involved with the planning; one who is great at working with kids—or at least his outward enthusiasm and expression of love compensate sufficiently for any communication weakness. If you fall in this category you are in an excellent position and might choose to skip the rest of this discussion about celebrants.

A second cause for someone's wondering why the celebrant is mentioned is going to sound facetious to some. Unfortunately it is a real, and too frequent, occurrence. It is either the attitude: "What does the celebrant have to do with all of this? We're the ones doing all the work. We'll just tell him what to do," or it is the situation where the celebrant says "You do all the work. I'll do whatever you want—but don't expect me to do much." If either of these examples is part of your parish scene you must change your ways if you're the guilty party or find a new celebrant, if he is the guilty party.

The celebrant is the visible, and most important figure at a children's liturgy. Even if he isn't doing anything at all at homily time or during a gimmick, even if he allows himself to be in the position where his only function is to say the "magic words" and make the whole celebration legal (which is a horrendous thought), it is his attitude that is the most important in conveying an interest and prayerfulness to the congregation.

If you really think that a successful children's liturgy can be celebrated with a celebrant who is not part of the planning of that liturgy or who is not interested in the role, put this book down now and never pick it up again while you have this attitude.

NOW! I MEAN IT!

If you are still reading please be aware that I will never be harsh again. I hope some things are said strongly, but not harshly.

If you are plagued with the problem of a celebrant who will not cooperate, and find this to be a continuing problem, find another celebrant even if it means seeking a new parish. Under no circumstances can you successfully work with an uncooperative celebrant and still convey love and God's message to children.

There is a middle ground between the extreme of the celebrant planning and performing the entire liturgy and zero involvement with pre-liturgy work. This is the area in which most people will find themselves.

If I had the power to make a commandment regarding dealing with celebrants it would be:

> "The celebrant must be comfortable with what is done at the Mass and must be part of the planning team. There is great variation in what priests will accept and the extent of the involvement they require in the planning process. After preliminary plans are made, meet with the celebrant and work WITH him."

There are a couple of key words that may need some explaining:

"Comfortable." No matter how great you think an idea is, if the celebrant is not comfortable with that idea it should not be done.

"Variation in what priests will accept." There are liturgical guidelines for the celebration of Mass. When children are involved so is the "Directory of Masses with Children"—you should be able to find one in a Catholic bookstore for about 50¢. You might sit and memorize all the requirements but it is the celebrant who counts. It goes back to his feeling of being comfortable with an idea. Please recognize that all priests are different and some are willing to try innovative things and eliminate certain allowable prayers but others are not comfortable with this elimination even if it is "correct."

Get to know your celebrants.

"Preliminary plans." (I even emphasized preliminary) Priests are usually very busy persons. I suggest that you look at the readings, select a theme, or if appropriate, a couple of theme possibilities, see what kinds of supplements can be used with those themes—and look for several supplements. After you've done this you are ready to meet with the priest. In the meantime hopefully he's done the same thing. Now you can enter a meeting with a couple of alternatives to build on.

"WITH him." Having prepared the preliminary material it is not expected that you walk into the meeting with, "Father, this is what you are going to do. . . ." Likewise it is not expected that before seeing your ideas Father will say, "This is what we're going to do. . . ." Rather, the conversation should start more like this, "Father, about the children's liturgy next month, we've checked out the readings and see two theme possibilities, 'This' and 'That.' Using theme 'This' we think we can do one, two, three or four and using theme 'That' five and six should work. We like 'this' better because . . . what do you think?" This is the *beginning* of a dialogue which means working WITH the celebrant. And don't go into your meeting with one serious possibility and several others that are really ideas which you wouldn't be comfortable with. Be willing to accept any alternative that you present and be open-minded about any suggestions from the celebrant. Be as flexible as possible but always be honest. If you don't think that the celebrant's idea will work, tell him. Simply be sure that your motives are always honest.

When the planning process is complete, do not assume that the celebrant will remember all the details of the liturgy. Nor may you assume that he will do all the necessary work of making arrangements, setting up, cleaning up, getting people to make banners, and so forth. Be perfectly clear about each person's responsibilities before leaving this meeting.

It is also important to recognize that while this is the only liturgy you're concerned with for the next month, the celebrant may have 10 others to think about. It might be helpful to give him notes outlining what is being done and what his responsibilities are.

2. Variety

Another area of meal planning is variety. Can you imagine coming to dinner every day and having tomato soup, hearts of lettuce with French dressing, a glass of milk and chocolate ice cream

for dessert. It doesn't sound like a bad combination for any meal but it certainly can get tiring with every meal.

Like repetitive menus, doing the same thing at each children's liturgy can become boring. This extends also into slightly disguised items. When you're evaluating what is planned at each liturgy, check it against what has been done at past liturgies.

3. Plan Ahead

This is an area that I will harp on throughout the entire book. It is being stated here, and throughout, in the hope that it will make enough meaning to have you do it. You may have had a successful experience with a meal among friends that happened on the spur of the moment but I'm confident that you can recount more failures than successes when proper planning was not a part of the preparation.

When it comes to liturgy it means a step-by-step evaluation of everything to be done to ensure that

- people know there will be a children's liturgy at 11 A.M. in the hall next Sunday,
- there is no conflict with a special "cub scout" Mass at 10 A.M.,
- music is distributed ahead of time,
- there is music to distribute,
- the banner that was specially made for this liturgy can actually be hung,
- you have boxes to carry off all the canned food that was collected,
- you have 30 pair of scissors (not 1 pair) for the kids to cut out their stars,
- the project that you have for the kids takes seven minutes instead of 30,
- if you're taking the kids out to classrooms you've synchronized watches and really will be back at the time agreed so that celebrant isn't put on the spot,
- you've rehearsed the play in the place where it will be given so that it isn't strange to the participants,
- you've let Bob, your child lector for the date, practice talking into a live microphone,
- you've provided a lower mike or a little stand so that Bob's mouth is near enough to the microphone,
- someone will turn out the lights at the right time,
- the person clicking the slide projector or changing the transparencies on the overhead projector knows when to do these things,
- the celebrant has a place to sit when he's talking with the kids,
- you have an extra magic marker if the first one suddenly goes dry at the wrong time,
- you have an emergency roll of scotch tape when an accident occurs two minutes before starting time,
- you have an extension cord for the overhead projector,
- someone has a key to the classrooms you're using during the Liturgy of the Word,
- the teachers who normally control those classrooms during the week are aware that you're using them on Sunday,
- you have enough table space for the procession items,
- the kids dressing the altar know how,
- the banner with interlocking pieces actually interlocks,

- the congregation will be able to leave the church within a reasonable time period, and certainly before the incoming crowd for the next Mass,
- etcetera,
- etcetera,
- etcetera,

I hope this *small* group of items is enough to give sufficient stress to the importance of planning ahead. If it doesn't, a few embarrassing situations will help (if they don't drive everyone away first).

4. Themes

When I first became involved with children's liturgies we were engrossed in selecting a catchy theme. It became an interminable period of talking and arguing. We'd look at canned liturgies (straight out of a book) and try to pick one that looked good. Next we'd go to the celebrant and try to convince him that this was the way to go. Before long it was impressed on us that we would be regularly and frequently involved with children's liturgies and that we needed to deal with the regular Sunday readings. So what did we do? We went back to our canned liturgies and tried to find one that would fit into the Sunday readings.

This was wrong too.

Eventually we learned that the selection of a theme has to come from the prescribed Sunday readings (usually). These are the readings that have been selected as appropriate for carrying the message of that day or season of the year. They have been included in the lectionary for a purpose and there are very few of them which are "R" or "X" rated, that is, which cannot allow children to participate.

I remind you that this book is a discussion of dealing with children's liturgies on a regular basis, as part of a Sunday Liturgy. If you are in a position where your investigation is aimed at meeting the needs of an occasional liturgy or a classroom situation where you are free to pick the theme first and then select the readings, you may quickly go ahead.

It is permissible to change the regular Sunday readings at certain times of the year. So, even if you are involved with children's liturgies on a regular basis, you too might take the theme-to-readings route once in awhile.

My general feelings are that the regular readings should be used with few exceptions. The justifications for this position are:

1. It quickly narrows the possibilities for themes and reduces the amount of time you would spend trying to pick a theme from a million possibilities rather than two or three choices.
2. If you're involved in children's liturgies on a regular basis, you should be comfortable enough with any readings to be able to pick a suitable theme.
3. In the future, the children will hear these readings at least once every three years. Three years from now you may be off in Anchorage, Alaska while those slightly older kids are still in Clearwater, Florida. If you had a successful liturgy three years ago, there is a chance that hearing those readings will trigger a spark of remembrance of fun at that liturgy. If this occurs, it should further mean that there is a remembrance and reinforcement of the theme.
4. These remembrances three, six and nine years later will bring back happy thoughts about liturgy. (There aren't too many teenagers with happy remembrances about liturgy.)

The first step in theme preparation is a review of the readings. Start with the gospel. What is the idea? What are the key words or phrases? (You may have just picked your theme.) Next go to the first reading. If it is from the Book of Kings it may be easy to use as a theme; if it is from Isaiah it may be difficult for children to understand but might still contain a key phrase which you can turn into a theme. Lastly, check out the second reading. It is unlikely that there will be a strong connection with the other two readings, but there still may be that key word or phrase which clearly states the thematic idea.

It is important that the previous paragraph be restated. In selecting themes, first check the gospel and second, check the first reading. Use the gospel almost all the time as the main idea even though the theme words might come from either the first or second reading. Infrequently—you might ignore the gospel message as your primary idea because the message is better expressed in the first reading. Almost never—you might disregard the message of the first and gospel readings and pick up the message of the second reading.

We have now established a theme planning axiom: "The theme concept shall come from the readings: gospel first, first reading second and second reading almost never." (If I want to get trite now I would make a simile between this axiom and last name first, first name second and middle name last.)

The actual "catchy" theme words (and the theme words should be catchy) can come from many sources such as: direct scripture quotes taken directly from a bible or children's liturgy book; a chapter title from a CCD book; a book or story title; song titles; movie titles; name of a TV show; a line from a song; a neat phrase; a line from an advertisement; the name of a holiday—see, the list goes on and on.

Following is a short list of general categories that the themes might fit into, the week where they might fit and some possible theme titles. (I've tried to avoid songs, scripture quotes, stolen titles, movies, advertisements, etc. In other words, I've missed all the good ones and haven't begun to touch all the possibilities.)

1. We are called to love God first.
   A cycle: Sundays 8, 12, 13, 14, 22, 29
   B cycle: Sundays 11
   C cycle: Sundays 12, 23, 31
   "We are called to love God first"
   "Choices—God first"
   "Priorities—God first"
   "Is God more important than (money) (TV) (family)?"
   "Don't look back"
   "How can I not worry about what I have to eat?"
   "God cares for us—do we care for Him?"
   "Think God first!"
   "Loving God first isn't always easy."
   "Do we love God enough?"
   "Who's number one?"

2. Jesus is God. Eucharist.
   A cycle: Advent 4; Baptism of the Lord; Lent 2, 3, 5, Easter; Easter 3, 5, 7; Sundays 2, 21
   B cycle: Lent 1, 4, 5; Easter 4, 5; Sundays 4, 17, 20

C cycle: Easter 7; Sundays 3, 12, 34
"Emmanuel—God is with us"
"This is My beloved Son"
"Jesus is the Messiah . . . what does that mean to me?"
"I am the resurrection and the life"
"He is risen!"
"Glory to God—Glory"
"Are not our hearts burning within us?"
"Jesus and sheep—are we sheep?"
"The way, the truth and the life"
"Let us glorify the Lord"
"The Lamb of God"
"Jesus is God!"
"The breaking of the bread"
"Who is He?"
"The reign of God is at hand"
"God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son"
"It is time to glorify Jesus"
"I am the good shepherd"
"In life's ratings, who's higher than God?"
"We can be sure that God is with us"
"The Holy One of God"
"How can He give us flesh to eat?"

3. How do we treat God? Do we recognize Him?
   A cycle: Advent 3; Passion Sunday; Easter 3, 4, 5; Sundays 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 27, 28, 34
   B cycle: Advent 3; Easter 2, 3, 5; Sundays 4, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 33, 34
   C cycle: Easter 2, 3; Sundays 4
   "Is Jesus really MY Messiah?"
   "Do I see Jesus in those around me?"
   "Don't put God off until tomorrow when there's still today"
   "His hometown didn't recognize him—do we?"
   "Would we kill him today, too?"
   "How much did Jesus suffer for what we will do today?"
   "Jesus—A stranger or a friend?"
   "Are WE seeking the buried treasure?"
   "Remember the breaking of the bread"
   "Faith enough to walk on water!"
   "Faith can move mountains . . . and people"
   "Where does the cornerstone go"
   "Lord, when did I see you hungry?"
   "Do I have as much faith as Thomas?"
   "Happy are they who have not seen but still believe"
   "Mine eyes have seen the glory"
   "He told us he would rise—why are we surprised?"
   "The devil recognized him—do I?"
   "Is Jesus playing hide and seek and we're IT?"
   "What kind of talk shakes YOUR faith?"
   "My Lord and my God"
   "believe, Believe, BELIEVE!"

4. What must we do to be saved?
   A cycle: Pentecost; Sundays 4, 6, 15, 23, 26, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34
   B cycle: Sundays 13, 18, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32
   C cycle: Advent 3; Easter 5, 6; Sundays 13, 14, 30
   "The ten commandments—God's laws of love"
   "Lip service—or more?"

"The reign of God is near—what are we doing about it?"
"Action—not words"
"Which beatitude describes me?"
"Are you willing to go all the way to Jesus?"
"Lord, open my (eyes) (ears) that I may (see) (hear) you"
"Salvation means doing something positive"
"The great commandments"
"Loving God means loving neighbors"
"Practice what you preach"
"How do I use my talents?"
"There are still openings in heaven for those willing to work"
"Am I a sheep or a goat?"
"Whoever loses his life for the gospel will save it"
"I hope the eye of the needle grows before I die"
"How much do I have . . . How much do I give?"
"Love is sometimes doing things we don't feel like doing"
"Love is . . ." (just check the card stores or newspapers for the rest of this line)
"Loving God is doing what *God* wants us to do"

5. Forgiveness/ Reconciliation/ Repent
   A cycle: Easter 2; Sundays 10, 24
   B cycle: Sundays 7
   C cycle: Lent 3, 4, 5; Easter 2; Sundays 8, 11, 22, 24, 25, 33
   "Jesus calls us to seek forgiveness"
   "To come back to the Father is to come back to others"
   "Walking together again"
   "New hope"
   "The new way"
   "Forgiveness is more than an eleven letter word"
   "Running away . . . or coming back to the Father"
   "As we forgive those who trespass against us"
   "Feelings . . . will ours allow us to forgive?"
   "How do you punctuate 'Jesus came to call us sinners'?"
   "Seventy times seven is more than 490"
   "Which role do I play in the story of the Prodigal Son?"
   "And there I was, stone in hand . . ."
   "Do I remember the Golden Rule at home?"
   "What's that 2 by 4 doing in your eye?"
   "It takes a big person to forgive . . . how tall are you?"
   "It's easy to forgive those we love, how about . . . ?"
   "Am I Christian enough to forgive even those who aren't sorry?"
   "I know God forgives . . . but do I?"
   "Fighting fair"

6. Jesus calls the Apostles
   A cycle: Sundays 3, 10, 11
   B cycle: Sundays 2, 3
   C cycle: Easter 3; Sundays 5
   "Jesus calls the Apostles—he calls us"
   "Here I am—send me!"
   "If *I* were an Apostle would I be Peter or Thomas . . . or Judas?"
   "Me an Apostle? You must be kidding . . . aren't you?"
   "Come, follow me"
   "Can you name all the Apostles?"

7. Mystery
   A cycle: Lent 2; Easter
   B cycle: Lent 2; Easter 2
   C cycle: Lent 2; Sundays 21, 32
   "Mystery . . . and not the Nancy Drew type either"
   "What does the transfiguration mean to me?"
   "Why are mysteries so hard to understand?"
   "Mystery—even in this day of great knowledge"

8. Jesus cures the sick
   A cycle: Lent 4, 5
   B cycle: Sundays 5, 6, 7, 9, 13, 23, 30
   C cycle: Sundays 9, 10, 28
   "Jesus cures the sick—he cures us"
   "Thank you, God, for our (eyes) (ears) (life)"
   "Is it more important to be cured . . . or forgiven?"
   "Do I use my (eyes) (ears) to (see) (hear) God?"
   "And He will raise us up, too"
   "It takes faith to be cured"
   "Who's afraid of leprosy anyhow?"
   "Walking and leaping and praising God"
   "Bless my soul, O Lord, . . . and my body too"
   "Do we have eyes and still not see?"

9. Temptation
   A cycle: Lent 1, 6; Sundays 22
   B cycle: Sundays 24, 26
   C cycle: Lent 1
   "And lead us not into temptation"
   "But it looks so good"
   "Strong enough to resist temptation, . . . who me?"
   "Temptation might be (TV) (food) (drink) (certain friends)"
   "Why does God permit all these good looking bad things?"
   "So that's what the tenth commandment means!"

10. Look at yourself and your potential
   A cycle: Pentecost; Sundays 5, 12, 19, 26, 31, 33
   B cycle: Trinity Sunday; Sundays 15
   C cycle: Sundays 7, 16, 17, 27, 29
   "Don't be afraid to use God's gifts"
   "I am me!"
   "Yes I can!"
   "Lord, sometimes I wish you hadn't given me all this talent"
   "Lord, help me use my abilities for YOUR glory"
   "You have to seek first"
   "Faith is more than basic duties"
   "Am *I* strong enough to turn the other cheek?"
   "Is watching TV all the time like burying your talent?"
   "The Holy Spirit will help!"
   "This little light of mine"
   "God, I need your help NOW"
   "If we really believe, we can do it!"
   "USING your ability is different than TALKING about it!"

"Do today what you can, rather than talking about what you will do when you're (older) (richer) (smarter)"
"Lord, please give me the strength to do what you've given me the strength to do"
"Lord, help me realize that I don't need *things* to do your work"
"It's time to do the Lord's work NOW!"

11. Charity toward others—love your enemies
    A cycle: Easter 2; Sundays 6, 7, 9, 24, 25, 27, 30, 34
    B cycle: Easter 6; Sundays 32
    C cycle:Sundays 15, 25
    "It's easy to love friends . . . how about enemies?"
    "It's easy to do things for those we love . . . but God asks more"
    "Try a little love—it's contagious"
    "Love your enemy"
    "But an eye for an eye is easier, Lord"
    "Some people are hard to love sometimes . . . can I love them anyhow?"
    "Love my enemies?!!! Who made up that stupid saying?"
    "Love is doing things for others"
    "Love is . . . (remember the card shop?)"
    "God loves ME enough to forgive me for all that I've done. Can I forgive others?"
    "Sometimes love can be less than laying one's life down, sometimes it can't"
    "Love is not something we shoo off"
    "Don't pretend to do it—really do it!"

12. God's promises. Covenant.
    A cycle: Lent 2; Easter; Easter 6; Sundays 21, 23, 28, 34
    B cycle: Lent 1, 2, 3; Easter 7
    C cycle: Lent 2, 3; Easter 4, 6; Trinity Sunday
    "Covenant. A two-way promise"
    "Lord, please remember your promise to me even though sometimes I forget my promise to you"
    "Even when we're promised heaven why do we sometime forget it?"
    "The Rainbow Covenant"
    "God's promise to (Abraham) (Moses) and where I fit in"
    "Jesus is God's way of keeping His promise . . . What's my way of keeping mine?"
    "WOW! God certainly promised me more than I promised Him"
    "Are you breaking YOUR promises? . . . God's keeping HIS!"
    "The CHURCH is part of God's promise"
    "Where 2 or 3 are gathered in his name . . ."
    "God STILL watches over us"
    "God promises to be our friend"
    "WE are the chosen people"

13. Be prepared
    A cycle: Advent 1; Sundays 33
    B cycle: Advent 1, 2
    C cycle: Advent 1; Sundays 18, 19
    "Stay awake! You must be ready!"
    "Wake up!"
    "Coming soon . . . Jesus!"
    "Be prepared . . . more than a Boy Scout motto"
    "Will YOU be ready when it happens?"

14. John the Baptizer
    A cycle: Advent 2
    B cycle: Advent 2, 3
    C cycle: Advent 2
    "John, the man who lost his head"
    "A voice in the wilderness"
    "The man before Jesus"
    "John, the Baptizer"
    "HE prepared the way for the Lord"
    "The moon is a reflection of the sun. John is a reflection of the Son"

15. Mary
    A cycle: Solemnity of Mary; all Mary feast days
    B cycle: Advent 4
    C cycle: Advent 4
    I can't begin to list all the Mary theme possibilities. I hardly imagine that anyone would need help on this one except to settle an argument over which one to use.

16. Welcome to the community. Marriage
    A cycle: Baptism of the Lord: Pentecost
    B cycle: Sundays 27
    C cycle: Sundays 2
    "Welcome to the community!"
    "A new family"
    "A sign of love"

Right now I have a very inadequate feeling.

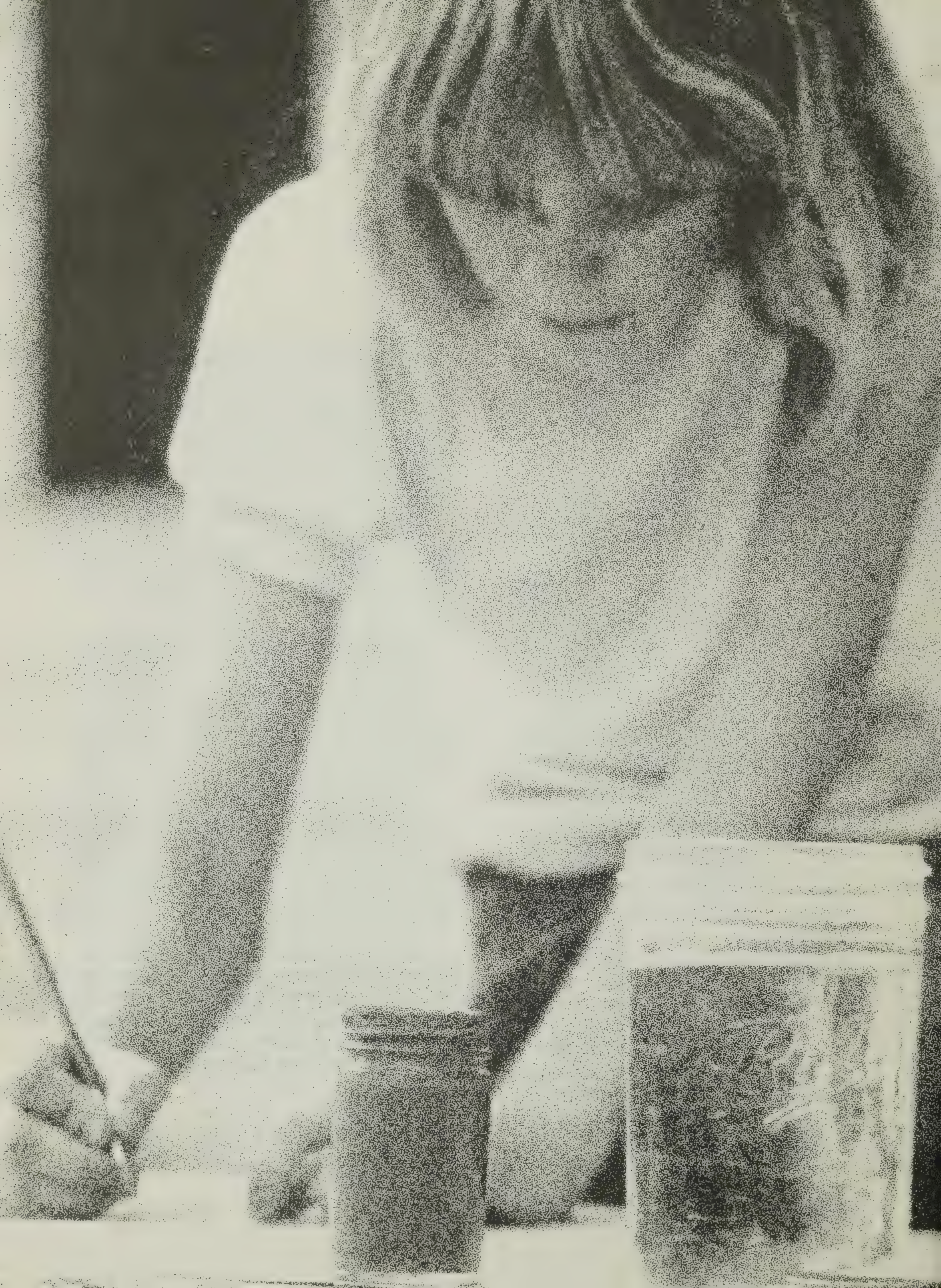
This comes because I have just tried to show some examples of possibilities for themes and I have only completed the equivalent of the first page in an encyclopedia. Even the 16 categories which are listed only begin the list of possibilities when I realize that there aren't headings for basic theme items such as the Trinity, the Father, The Spirit, time, signs, community, service, personal responsibility, God's teachings or families. (And those few additions still leave the list very short.) The intent of these pages of theme possibilities is to *start* your thought process. Please don't examine to see

- that every possible week is covered or
- why I chose "that" category for the 23rd Sunday of the Year instead of the obvious one.

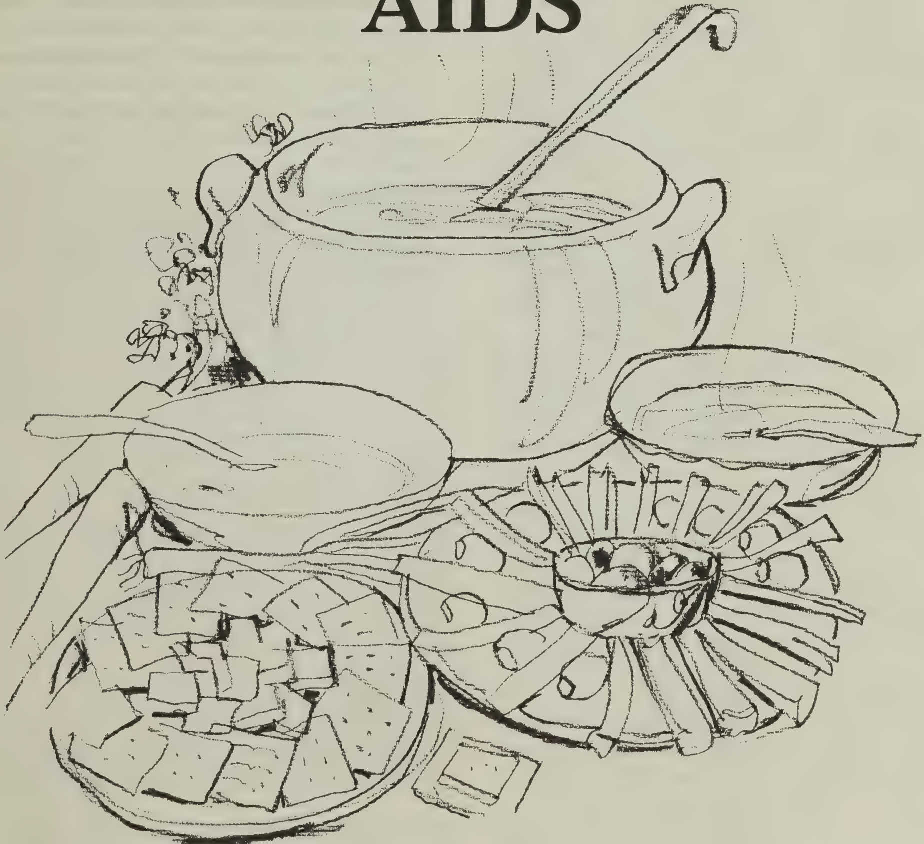
These aren't the important issues. Please use this only as a start in your thinking process. After you have a little experience you won't need any help in selecting a theme.

Once the theme is established you've reached the same point as you would have if you'd decided that next Saturday's meal is to be an Italian style dinner. Then you would have to decide what type of appetizers, salads, beverages, sauces, desserts and main dishes are to be served. Now, you have to plan the liturgy.

Think of the liturgy planning process as you would that Italian dinner. You would hardly serve won-ton soup at this dinner—don't put its equivalent in the liturgy. You might also note that this Italian style meal doesn't need every ingredient possible; neither does the liturgy.



Chapter 3
BANNERS, PROCESSIONS, & INVOLVEMENT AIDS



Appetizers

JUICES

Juices are small tastes which should whet the appetite. In liturgy, juices can be likened to decorations, particularly banners. Sometimes there is a tendency to make banners a big production followed by nothing else. Can you imagine going out to dinner and being served a delicious, albeit substantial juice, but nothing else? Banners and other decorations should whet the appetite for the other things which give the meal the real substance.

There are two general types of banners. Look around most churches and you'll find all kinds of paper, cardboard, burlap or cloth material filled with creative artwork and letters. These are representative of the first type of banner. Ideas of "how to" and "what to" related to making banners of this type can be found in banner or craft books and cutesy and meaningful phrases can be found on the buttons or plaques in many religious goods catalogues.

This type of banner is characteristic of those used at most liturgies. I believe the "how to" books describe their making better than I can. I simply would like to offer the following suggestions based on my own experience where we found ourselves making banners out of exotic materials—usually the night before the liturgy:

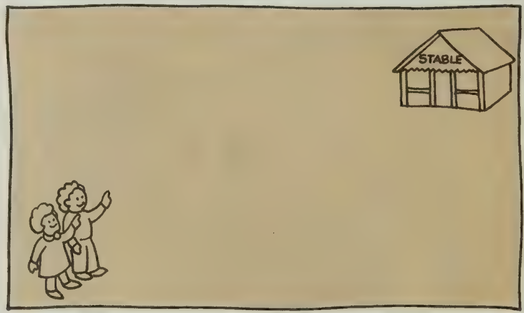
1. Call on others to make banners—that reserve talent of other people (Luxury #10). There are many people willing to help on a limited basis and making a banner is just right. Or consider asking a school or CCD class to make a banner. It's especially appropriate if the banner ties in with the theme they're working on in the classroom.

2. Be practical. Measure the space in front of the altar and cut a piece of masonite to fit it (about 30 inches by 60 inches should be about right for most places). Paint one side of the masonite with a plain white enamel. This side will now take newsprint or construction paper by taping it on and it will not chip or show marks when the tape is removed. The reverse side should be painted with a flat white paint. It can be the side used for original painted banners. When the "original" painting is no longer needed, cover it with another coat or two of plain white. The painted masonite provides a portable, reusable banner board which can be put in place in a few seconds.

The second type of banner is that which is constructed during the liturgy. This idea can be best expressed by a few examples.

Theme: Getting Ready for Christmas:
Stepping Stones to Jesus' Birthday

This banner begins like this



and a short homily directing the kids to think about something special they can do to get ready

for Jesus' birth (an Advent sacrifice). After carefully planting some seeds for ideas, ask the children to cut out pre-outlined, multicolored feet from construction paper on which they are to write their names and the something special that they promise to do. The feet are added to the banner and the end products are a lot of kids washing dishes and taking out the trash for mom and a banner that looks like



There are some shortcuts and alternative methods to preparing this banner:

1. Take the kids to a classroom for the cutting and taping operation—but be certain the rest of the congregation sees the banner both before and after.
2. Have the feet cut out for them.
3. Have the banner lined with double faced scotch tape where the feet are to go. This way most of them will be on the path and in the right direction.
4. Be sure to realize how important it is that this operation doesn't take 30 minutes. Make certain it can be done in a short time—it is a juice.

Theme: Jesus Called the Apostles: He Calls Us. (The starting idea for this project came from Sister Janet Marie Bucher's "Run With Him" published by North American Liturgy Resources.)

This banner is formed by three groups working on separate but coordinated projects. It is best done by different age groups.

The theme is reinforced by the story of "Swimmy" by Leo Lionni (see Chapter 4). Swimmy is a very small fish in an ocean filled with large fish. He gathers all the small fish in the shape of a giant fish so that they may explore the ocean without fear of being eaten.

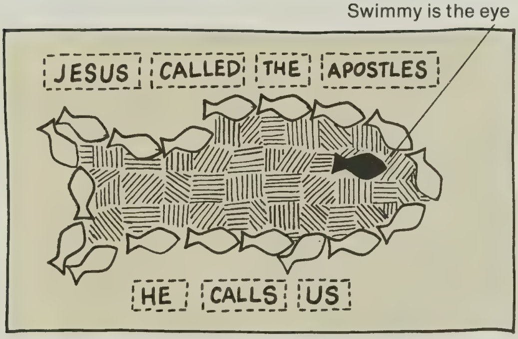
The youngest group working with construction paper and scissors can cut out pre-outlined small fish which will be added as the last step in the banner-making experience.

As part of their experience, the next age group can have a word search from among a few hundred words or look for the words on the bottom of seats or some other ingenious hiding place, to find the words: "Jesus called the Apostles. He calls us."

The oldest group can talk about the kinds of things that the gospel calls us to do. This group can look for pictures displaying positive actions and make a collage from these pictures. The background material for the collage can be a piece of newsprint cut into a giant fish shape.

Portions of the older groups and all of the

younger group can carry their products in a procession and make a banner



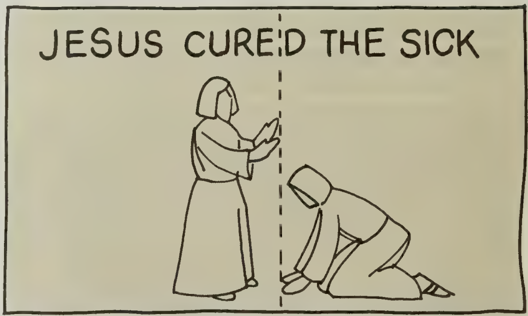
Step 1: add the collage (2 persons)
Step 2: add words (7 persons — one each word)
Step 3: add small perimeter fish (one for each child — as many children as you have)

Again you are reminded to recognize time and to back all the materials with scotch tape or load the board with it. And don't hesitate to stand at the board and help put the whole thing together; the congregation will be aware of the kids and not their helper.

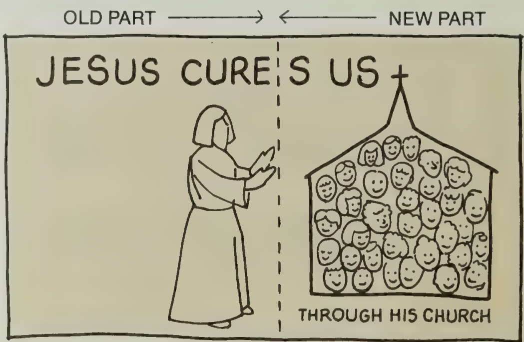
Theme: Jesus Cured the Sick. He Cures Us.

This is an example of an overlay banner. The basic banner before the liturgy looks like:

The dotted line is to help you visualize — it doesn't appear anywhere



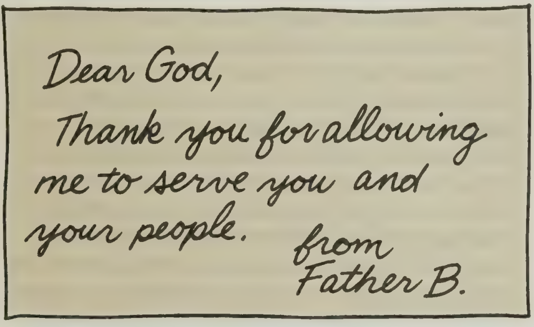
The homily is to be a discussion on reconciliation and, perhaps, the sacrament of Penance. It can end with a question about what Jesus has left to help cure us for the times we suffer the sickness of sin. The answer can be puzzle pieces (3 or 4 big pieces) which when put together in the right places over the original banner leave



Note that the church is people — not a building

Theme: Twenty-five Years a Priest

Another example of an overlay banner is a liturgy wherein the priest is celebrating an anniversary expressing his commitment and thanking God for allowing him to serve His people. The basic banner is a simple letter to God.

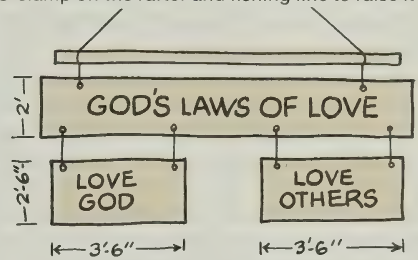


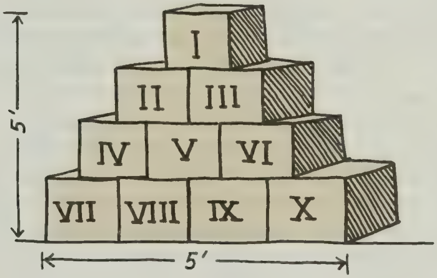
At Communion meditation time the priest is honored by his community, particularly its children, and a pre-cut blank piece of paper, or one with the priest's picture on it, is added over "allowing me to serve you and your people . . . from."

Theme: Ten Commandments—God's Laws of Love

Banners can be three-dimensional, too. Or hang from the ceiling like

You could hang this portion from a rafter using a C-clamp on the rafter and fishing line to raise it





15" ± cube boxes — sides and tops can be covered and appropriately decorated relative to the commandment

I hope that these examples will start your brain "juices" flowing. I hope you can see that their construction is integral to the theme and incorporated into the activity of the liturgy. I think these types make the best juices.

FRUIT CUP

It isn't always necessary that you provide every single portion of the meal. Sometimes you might like to ask the guests to bring something, like a fruit cup.

Fruit cups are those things which you ask the congregation members to bring with them to be part of the liturgy. The strengths of this activity are: 1) it requires some sort of preparation by the congregation, 2) it effects more congregational activity and 3) it enhances the liturgy.

Fruit cups fall in the general categories of gifts, decorations and others. I think they can be best described by some examples:

Money. This is the fruit cup which the congregation is asked to bring to all regular liturgies. It represents an offering to God. Sometimes it is not given or received in the spirit which it is supposed to represent.

Flowers. Is your altar decorated with flowers each week? Where do they come from? Can you imagine a bouquet formed by one flower from each family in the congregation? You might effect this by starting with two empty vases on the altar and directing the congregation to place their flowers in these as they file in before the liturgy.

Flowers. To honor Mary. This might sound a little "old-fashioned" to some liberals but I guarantee its success. Imagine a celebration where Mary is the "star" figure or even a May liturgy where you want to honor Mary at the opening of the liturgy. Ask each person to bring a flower to honor Mary. I can't think of a church where there isn't a side altar or statue of Mary which can't be the receiving area.

Toys. Many parishes have toy and game collections for needy children at Christmas but there is no reason why it can't be done at any other time when you're working with a "giving" theme. Christmas works best though because it is a special time for children and giving. For efficiency the gifts should be collected before Christmas day or eve but for maximum results it has to be done on Christmas eve or day.

There are some pitfalls to watch for when collecting gifts:

1. Even though it sounds greedy, new toys are best. All too frequently you'll find that used toys are junk or are badly in need of repair or replacement pieces. Let the Marines, who are professionals in the used toy business at Christmas time, take the used items.

2. Encourage people to wrap their gifts. But make certain they mark the appropriate age and sex of the desired recipient on the outside.

3. Make certain you have a place to get rid of them. That sounds like a harsh statement but you might find yourselves loaded with toys on Christmas eve and wondering what to do with them. The logical places that you should investigate ahead of time are families in need within your parish, social service agencies within the community and any worthwhile area charity. You may discover that most area charities really have no need for Christmas gifts (we were surprised, too) but need gifts for birthdays during the year. I suggest that there is nothing wrong with giving these gifts to the charity for their distribution during the year so the children can realize that the spirit of Christmas does occur all year long.

Getting toys collected and distributed on Christmas eve or day can be a terrible nuisance. Please, please, put up with that short term inconvenience. You will be making many people happy—the givers, the receivers, and when done, you.

Other Gifts. There may be another need in your community. Look around. Is there a nursing home? The elderly continue to be our most unrecognized group of lonely and sometimes needy people. Would it fit the theme to recognize older people by bringing them gifts?—maybe the gift can be a promise to spend time visiting with someone in the home.

Canned Food. Collection of non-perishable food items for the needy is probably already a

practice in your community. Incorporating a food collection with the theme of the liturgy, such as a Thanksgiving Day collection, will bring an above-average response to the practical needs. It will also enhance the liturgy.

Pictures. When celebrating All Saints Day, what is more fitting than a collage formed by pictures of future saints? It will also help the congregation recognize that there are more saints than those few with Saint in front of their names.

Pictures also can be connected to a community theme. Can you imagine an altar filled with family pictures during a liturgy celebration? (Be sure to let people know in advance that they can take their pictures home again.)

A written note or promise. Themes of thanks, covenant, Lenten or Advent promise, hope, sorrow and a multitude of other things allow a request for a written statement by the (Griffen) family relating to that theme. These statements, clearly explained ahead of time, can list things like:

> Our promise for a Lenten sacrifice.
>
> The one thing our family is most grateful for is . . .
>
> Dear God, I am sorry that I fail you when I . . .

Plan a receiving station for the statements. It can be a simple box on the altar, a board where our hopes are displayed, a tree, a brazier where our sins are burned, or . . .

Is it appropriate that the note or promise be presented in a certain form, such as a teardrop?

Symbols. Similar to the written note or promise, you can ask each person or family to bring a symbol of how they feel about certain themes. This can be a tough one. Make certain that you examine the theme and can think of several possibilities before picking this fruit cup. Areas of best response might be symbols of family unity, fun, conjugal love, commitment, life, faith, hope, and seeing.

Return. If you've given the congregation something to take home at an earlier liturgy (see desserts) that requires action or meditation on their part and fits the theme of another liturgy, ask for its return. Not only will this act assist in more congregational involvement, the percent returned will give you an idea of what response you're getting (don't ever expect a miracle).

The request for gifts, such as toys and food should be connected with sacrifice. It will mean almost nothing to kids if mom and dad simply go out and buy a game or a can of food. It will mean something if the canned food is brought by money saved by giving up dessert this week or if that super toy given at the Christmas liturgy was paid for by the money saved when the entire family ate potatoes and beans with no meat every Wednesday in Advent.

Be sure to promote the advantages of sacrifice when requesting a toy or food collection. Give examples and stress *family* involvement.

SOUP

Does the idea of a procession make you think of a lot of altar boys, incense, chanting, a couple of crosses, a bishop decked out with miter and staff—or little boys and girls in white suits and dresses with proud parents snapping pictures all over the place and the kids afraid that Sister Anita will yell at them if they smile the least little bit? That's what I used to think processions were and I hated them—basically because I don't think God is that big on formality (there's a difference between respect and formality) and what can be more proof than a bunch of shepherds around a manger?

However, processions, already occur during liturgies, at the entrance, the closing and the bringing up of the Offertory gifts. Tastefully done, these opportunities can be expanded into a more meaningful part of the liturgy. It is also

reasonable occasionally to emphasize the significance of these times.

Examples:

Fruit Cup Processions

Earlier in this chapter there was a discussion of things you can ask the congregation to bring to the liturgy (fruit cups). Well, what do they do with the items they bring? One effective method of handling incoming items is to let the people carry them in procession and place them in the appropriate place. Using some of the previously mentioned items:

1. Flowers to honor Mary can be carried in the opening procession while singing a suitable entrance song. The flowers can be placed one by one, or two by two since that's the way processions normally go, on a table or in vases at Mary's altar or statue. Beginning the procession is really quite simple. Immediately before the liturgy is to begin, ask the people having flowers to go to the back of the church where they are directed in line behind the altar boys.
2. Christmas gifts can be brought forward by people coming from all over the place, rather than in an orderly line, to the stable while a drummer boy stands by. This operation which seems fitting at the Offertory, will cause a much greater show of handkerchiefs to eyes than people putting their gifts in boxes before the liturgy begins. (The implication of handkerchiefs to eyes is a tender and warm realization of what is occurring which will not be noticed as clearly the other way.)
3. I hope you're starting to get the feel of processions with the things people bring—like the pictures or symbols or canned goods or whatever. Let them carry these things as part of the sacrifice. And don't be afraid to allow them to hold them until the Offertory—particularly if they are offerings—like Thanksgiving or Christmas gifts.

But be certain that if people are bringing items for processions that you give them a clear indication of what to do with them. This indication must be given when they come in before the liturgy and when it is time to process. The only direction you might give when they begin to arrive is, "Hold onto your (flowers), we'll give directions before Mass starts." I guarantee that if you don't do this someone will put his or her (flower) on a table somewhere and everyone coming in after that will follow suit.

You also should be aware that people might be a little shy, at first, about carrying things in procession, but once they get started they'll really be turned on.

Music Processions.

You'll be surprised at the impact of including musicians in procession. It can be done both entering and leaving. I don't recommend it always, but it can be very effective with occasional use. A couple of examples of this type include:

1. "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord." Begin an Advent liturgy with the "Godspell" method of a single voice beginning this song from the opening procession.
2. "Come Along with Me to Jesus." Start the music in the back and have the celebrant call the children from their seats to follow the musicians and to come along with him to the altar and Jesus.
3. "Peace is Flowing Like a River." A slow closing with the musicians leading the celebrant away while singing this song leaves a very calm and completed feeling.

Need I mention that most of the secret of including music in a procession depends on the song chosen?

Juice Processions.

Remember the discussion about making multiple-piece banners? Let them be carried in the opening or Offertory processions in pieces and put together at the altar. Be certain you know how long it will take to put them together. Little is more boring than spending 15 minutes watching one person, or 100 people, trying to put things in the right place.

Theme Processions.

Themes honoring a person lend themselves to introducing a procession with things relating to that person. For instance, a Christ the King celebration might include a procession of

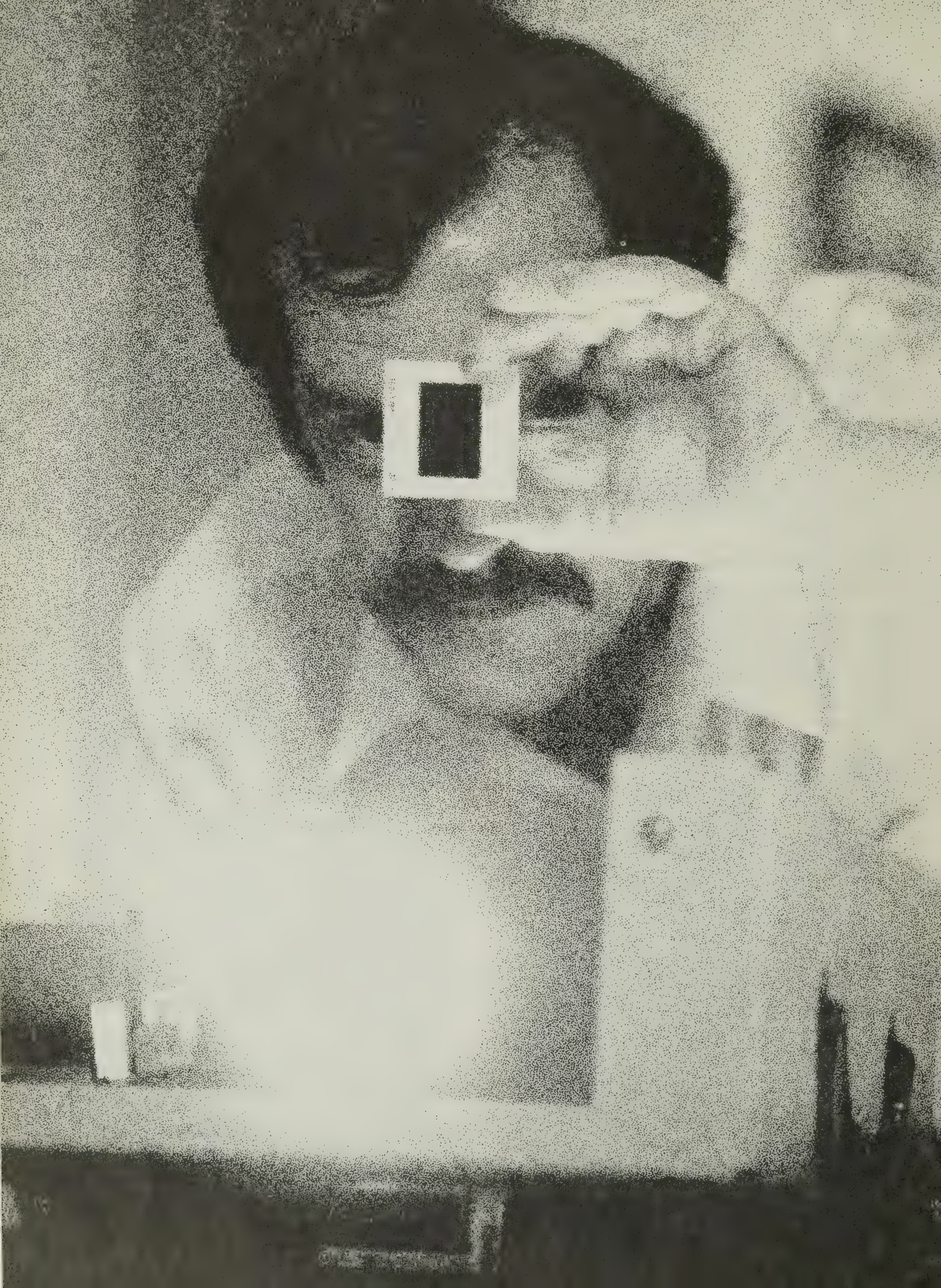
- altar boys, followed by
- musicians, followed by
- banners. Go through the existing felt material banner collections at your church. Without even looking hard you'll find five or six honoring Jesus. Put each on a hanger. Find or prepare a place to hang them. Grab six medium-size children five minutes before the liturgy begins, instruct them to carry their banners high. Instruct them to follow the musicians until they reach the altar. Have someone at the altar who will help with the banners.
- signs of Jesus. With a short statement, think of six or seven things that are symbolic of Jesus. Write a short statement about each. Pick up six or seven children five minutes ahead of time, each capable of reading the short statement. Tell the children to follow the banners until they reach the altar. Emphasize that they should carry their items high so they can be seen. Have someone at the altar holding a microphone and helping the children. Have each child hold up the item and read his or her statement. Then have the child put the item on the altar.

The items can be things like bread (Jesus is the bread of life), a candle (Jesus is the light of the world), bible (Jesus brings the Good News of salvation), rock (Jesus is our strength), a fishing net (Jesus wants to catch all people to follow him), a shepherd's crook (Jesus is the Good Shepherd), a crown (Jesus is our king), etc.

Theme processions can be done when the theme relates to people or concepts. I think it is important to give a *short* explanation of each item included in the procession so the congregation will know 1) all the items that are included and 2) why each item is included.

Other Procession Ideas

1. What do you usually have on Passion Sunday? Why not wave them while marching around the church one time?
2. Have a completely bare altar until the Offertory procession which can include all the dressing items. You may be surprised how many items there are. You might even have a short explanation on why each item is there. You'd better be certain that the people carrying the procession items know where they go.
3. Jesse Tree procession. This idea explains itself if you known what a Jesse Tree is. If you don't, research it.
4. Giant footsteps. Many themes offer the idea of our following Jesus. How about pasting giant (or tiny) footsteps on the floor and inviting the kids to precede the celebrant in an opening procession to follow the steps to Jesus.
5. Statue. If you don't want a "big-deal" procession, include a statue of the appropriate person in the opening procession and place it in a visible place.
6. Honor procession. If you have a First Communion, a wedding anniversary, Mother's or Father's Day, invite the appropriate people to join in the opening procession.



Chapter 4
PREACHING METHODS



Salads

I am amazed that in this day when there are so many spectacular and unique methods of presenting ideas to the public (whether it be a new toothpaste or the latest devil possession film) that we continue to hear the Sunday liturgy in monotone. Not that the Sunday liturgy has to be presented with a lot of hoopla and fanfare—we shouldn't try to compete with television marketing methods. We already have a great product but its display doesn't have to be bland. Remember that we're talking about children now, and children are used to catchy and cute presentations, so it is even more critical that the theme of the liturgy be presented in a way that might catch their attention.

The obvious caution is to recognize the importance of the worship and not to get lost in the gimmick. We must also recognize, however, that in addition to verbal instruction to His people, God talked with audio-visuals in both the Old and New Testaments. Surely you remember the parting of the Red Sea and burning bush of Moses' time and the voices from heaven and doves during Jesus' time. More simply, Jesus asked for a coin to make a point and pointed out the lilies of the field. He also taught about loving persons, responsibility and rejoicing through parables. Stop and think a minute about your favorite gospel passages before the Last Supper—I'll bet it is a parable rather than a straight dissertation on rules.

The Liturgy of the Word (without intending to water down its importance) is similar to a school lesson on history, philosophy, ethics and sociology. How many of these school subjects did you actually *learn* from a teacher dryly reading from a text book? This is what many of our lectors do. Or how much did you learn from a monotone non-moving lecturer standing in the front of the room? Yet this unfortunately describes many of our homilists!

The concept of using supplemental readings and media is one about which I feel very strongly. I feel that *properly used,* it is a meaningful way of presenting Jesus' teachings and will normally leave a more lasting remembrance of the moral with children and adults. It does, unfortunately, also present two hazards. First, media in church is going to upset some people. This is not a rational reaction on the part of those who will be bothered, but it will indeed occur. This reaction, in itself, cannot be used as a discouraging force. The second hazard is the misuse of media. It can occur in several ways.

The most common abuse of media is the failure to plan ahead. This shows itself in people not being loud enough, or knowing their lines, or a filmstrip started backwards in the projector, or no screen, or a non-functioning record player. Ninety-nine percent of these incidents are avoidable by simply planning and testing ahead of time. Previous bad experiences will scare people off the next time they see you pulling out media.

A second abuse is using something just for the sake of using it. "I have just seen the greatest movie on sharing, it would be great for a children's liturgy" seems to be enough reason to include a movie on sharing . . . even though the movie is 24 minutes long and the theme of the readings is faith and doubt. Any media presentation must fit the theme. It must also be able to be shown within a reasonable time limit.

The third abuse is one that some of the "great" folk groups are guilty of (some organists and choirs too)—the grand production. We must remember that we are trying to help people worship and better understand God's message, not to display our own talents for self-glorification. This may be the hardest pitfall of all to avoid.

But enough of all this preaching without the aid of anything but the written word; let's get down to real examples of what salads are.

Children's Stories

I'm not certain whether the authors of children's books write for money, morality, sheer nonsense or love. It is probably a combination of all these things except I don't think that too many of them make hordes of money. I do know that frequently they are modern prophets, that is, people passing onto other people the message of how God wants us to live.

Children's stories can be used as substantial additions to the main meal. They allow a simple, clear telling of the message while holding a spellbound audience. It is amazing how many children's stories correlate to the gospel message. Furthermore it is relatively simple for even a homilist whose ability is only fair at best to make that correlation mean something to a group of kids—and adults.

It is sad that these readily available words of the prophets are so underused. Instead we read to young children the words of Ecclesiastes and Paul before telling them of Jesus' warning against greed. Then we wonder why they aren't getting the gospel message. Now I have nothing against Ecclesiastes and Paul, they make fine reading in the proper context, but can we really expect an eight-year-old to comprehend or even to be turned on enough to listen to the gospel message which follows all these words?

Try once telling these kids an interesting story about greed, and there are lots available, and then ask them to listen to the gospel to hear what Jesus has said about this subject. Follow this up with a discussion of what is common about the story and the gospel and you've taken a step on the way to giving a meaningful gospel message to youngsters. And you'll probably notice that it was more meaningful to the not-so-youngsters too.

Here is a recipe for preparing a children's story salad:

1. Find a story with the same point as the gospel message or the theme of the liturgy.
2. Read the story. If *you* find it interesting, go ahead. If *you* don't find it interesting, empty the bowl and start over.
3. Make sure that whoever is doing the story does not intend to publicly read it from anything but perhaps index-card-size cue sheets. Even cue cards, without another visual distraction, will adversely affect the taste.
4. See what other ingredients can be added to the salad. Can it be acted out instead of told? Can pictures be shown on an overhead projector while the story is being told? Can a slide show accompany it? Can another visual image be presented?
5. Remember that this is a salad that you're preparing, not the main meal. This means that the story is an aid, nothing more. But it is an important aid designed to make the main meal taste better.

Some of the stories that I've reviewed and catalogued for possible use are:

"Why the Chimes Rang" by Raymond McDonald Alden

A Christmas story wherein the best gift brought to the altar will make the chimes ring. Each year all kinds of gifts are brought but only things people really did not want themselves. Two brothers on a journey help a frozen woman. Later the younger brother puts a small coin of his brother on the altar and the chimes go crazy.

(Don't stop at Christmas for this one, think of all giving themes.)

"The King's Fountain" by Lloyd Alexander
E. P. Dutton and Co. Inc.

When the king decided to build a great water fountain which would cut off the city's water supply, a poor humble man realized that someone must convince the king otherwise. He searched for a wise man, then a smooth talker, later a brave man. When he finds each of these singular virtues insufficient, he goes himself and discovers that he has the necessary combination of talents to dissuade the king.

(A good lesson on personal responsibility, yes I can, act yourself if action is needed.)

"I'll Be the Horse if You'll Play with Me" by Martha Alexander
The Dial Press

Humorous story of a child's frustration at not having anyone to play with her. Her older brother is available only when no one else is around for him and then, when she, not he, will be the horse.

(Do we treat people like this?)

"Authur's Nose" by Marc Brown
Little, Brown and Company

Unhappy with his nose, Authur the aardvark visits the rhinologist to get a new one. After trying many others, he realizes that his own nose makes him him. His friends agree.

(Recognition that we must be ourselves, not an image of someone else.)

"Stone Soup" by Marcia Brown

Three hungry soldiers beg for some food from the selfish villagers who have hidden all their food. They set up to make "stone soup" for themselves and the poor foodless villagers. Eventually the villagers "find" additives, one at a time, which are needed to make the soup taste just a little better. Soon the "stone soup" is a thick soup suitable for a king.

(Wonder if this is how the miracle of the loaves and fishes took place? Good for sharing and unselfishness too.)

"Mr. Gumpy's Outing" by John Burningham

Mr. Gumpy invites kids—if they don't squabble; rabbits—if they don't hop; chickens—if they don't flap, etc. They all *do* after a short time and the boat sinks. They swim to shore and Mr. Gumpy simply says, "Let's walk home—goodby—come another day."

(Jesus invites us to come along with him and asks us not to sin—but we do. He forgives us and says "come again with me.")

"Good Lemonade" by Frank Asch
Franklin Watts

One summer Hank decided to open a lemonade stand. On the first day, business wasn't too bad, but by the second day the word was out—Frank's lemonade tasted terrible. Frank tried every superficial thing he could until he finally recognized that the problem was his lemonade. He corrected the real problem and achieved good results.

(Sometime we have to look at the *real* us.)

"The Family Under the Bridge" by Natalie Savage Carlson
Harper and Row

Story of Armand, a French hobo, who discovers a homeless mother and her three children. He bumbles for awhile when he tries to help. As he grows to love the children he becomes a responsible citizen again—even to the point of getting a job.

(Good story about how love of others can transform a person. Too long in its original form (97 pages) so editing is necessary.)

"Who Has Seen the Wind" by Marion Conger
Abingdon Press

We really don't see the wind and neither did Mary so she asked her parents, the postman and the milkman. Mary recognizes that she does see the wind because she see its effects.

(Reminds one of the Spirit. Story is an excellent idea but could be shorter and better done.)

"Wind Rose" by Cresent Dragonwagon
Harper and Row

Beautiful description of a mother's feeling while carrying a baby inside her and through birth. A real love story.

(I've read this with no other visual support to fifth graders who listened raptly. It is an exception to the rule of paraphrasing since paraphrasing wouldn't equal the storywriter's ability.)

"Do You Love Me?" by Dick Gackenbach
A Clarion Book, The Seabury Press

Walter learns, the hard way, by accidentally killing a hummingbird, that we must give freedom to some of the things we love in order to allow them to exist as they were meant to exist.

(Good lesson for recognizing the needs of others—and "letting go" lesson for parents.)

"The Wise Fool" by Paul Galdone
Random House

Should the porter pay the cook for enhancing his roll with the smoke of a cooking goose? The testy argument is settled by the wisdom of the court jester with a talent comparable to Solomon's.

(Assuming you picked up the word "talent," let me also drop the word "peacemaker".)

"Rotten Ralph" by Jack Gantos
Houghton, Mifflin Company, Boston

Ralph, a very, very nasty cat, finally sees the error of his ways . . . almost.

(Suitable for reconciliation and recognition that sometimes we, too, can be "Sometimes you are very hard to love, Ralph".)

"Mushroom in the Rain" by Mirra Ginsberg
MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc.

The rain was over and all the animals came out from under the mushroom. How could there have been enough room beneath it for the ant,

the butterfly, the sparrow and the rabbit? The animals could not believe that the mushroom had sheltered them all. The wise owl explained about mushrooms growing in the rain.

(But is the real reason sharing of what we have?)

"The Cat and the Collector" by Linda Glovach

A collector takes in a cat to help him. One day the cat is tempted to eat a plump bird (a friend of the collector) and kills it. The collector tells the cat to leave forever, but realizes that this is the nature of the cat.

(Good for temptation but be careful that the conclusion doesn't appear to be that it is okay to give in to it because "it's our nature".)

"Crystal is the New Girl" by Shirley Gordon
Harper and Row

"Crystal is the new girl in our school. We all stare at her when she comes into class. Nobody in school is friends with Crystal" is the beginning of an absolutely beautiful story of how Susan slowly develops a friendship with the new girl.

(Story tells us that it is easy to hate someone we don't know, but with knowledge can come love.)

"Sound of Sunshine, Sound of Rain" by Florence Parry Heide
Parents Magazine Press

This excellent story, a little long, can start tears. It is the first-person story of a blind boy who thoroughly enjoys the sound and feel of things. An ice cream man befriends him and we learn that color is not important.

(Suitable for racial understanding; appreciating the wonders and beauty of creation; friendship; loneliness; blindness; and just plain enjoyment of reading a love story.)

"Evan's Corner" by Elizabeth Hill
Holt, Rinehart and Winston

Evan lives with his parents, three sisters and two brothers in a two-room flat. He longs for a place that he can call his own and gets his pick of all eight-room corners. He carefully chooses and decorates his corner but feels something is still missing.

(It is a discovery, in this beautiful and simply told story, that his emptiness is relieved by sharing with others.)

"One Fine Day" by Nonny Hogrogian

A fox drinks a pail of milk left out by a woman. She cuts off his tail and refuses to give it back unless he returns the milk. The fox goes to the cow who demands something else in payment. As he continues to go to the person who can provide the something else, they demand a new something else until at last he reaches the miller who gives the needy fox some of his grain.

(Charity.)

"Don't Forget the Bacon" by Pat Hutchins
Greenwillow Books

A simple story of confusion about remembering the items on a shopping list and always—well at least almost always—remembering the bacon.

(Reminds us that no matter how confused we are about remembering the items on life's list, we must remember some things.)

"The Surprise Party" by Pat Hutchins

The message gets mixed up a little at a time as it is whispered down the line until at the end it is completely changed.

(Do we fail to really listen; or do we hear only what we want to hear?)

"I Wonder if Herbie's Home Yet" by Mildred Kantrowitz

Smokey wonders how Herbie can be off playing with Lester Pickney. He recollects all that he has done for Herbie and knows that it can't be because of these things. Soon his curiosity turns to anger and hatred. Smokey's wait in the dentist's office brings him around again to what he can do to make up.

(Not really a reconciliation theme but a cute story of friendship.)

"Peter's Chair" by Ezra Jack Keats
Harper and Row

Peter was unhappy enough to run away from home when he learned that the furniture he had really outgrown was being painted for his baby sister. When he recognized that this meant he was growing up, giving it to this sister became okay.

(Suitable for discussions about sharing and growing.)

"Apt. 3" by Ezra Jack Keats
The MacMillan Company

Sam is curious to find out which apartment is the source of the beautiful harmonica music. When he learns that it comes from the blind man's place, he is surprised to find it can be exciting to be friends with someone whose handicap had scared him and he also learns of the many talents of the blind man.

(Someone in the neighborhood who seems to be different actually can be exciting. Good for reaching out to others.)

"Whose Mouse are You?" by Robert Kraus

A very short and simple story about belonging to a family.

"The Rich Man and the Shoemaker" by Jean de LaFontaine
Franklin Watts Inc.

A charming story about the worry which having money causes and how inner peace is more important. In fact, making and worrying about money can make one quite unhappy.

(Obvious possibilities on the real lack of importance of money and the actual importance of being at peace with ourselves.)

"The Red Balloon" by Albery Lamorisse
Doubleday and Company, Inc.

Classic escapades of a small boy and a balloon that's like a pet or friend.

(Nicely done story of friendship and freedom.)

"Swimmy" by Leo Lionni
Pantheon

Swimmy is a free thinker who wants to change the long-term fear of tragedy which is quite usual in the life of the sea, i.e., being swallowed by a bigger fish. He realizes that by cooperation among the small fish they can live in a safe way and enjoy the benefits of exploring the unknown depths.

(Working together, cooperation and mission are possible themes for this well-told story.)

"In the Rabbitgarden" by Leo Lionni

Typical Lionni-type tale, excellent children's story. Despite the old rabbit's warning, two young rabbits find a way to get apples from the

apple tree without being caught by the fox. Starts out like the garden of Eden but the snake is a friend who saves the rabbits from the fox.

(Friends and cooperation are possible themes.)

"Tico and the Golden Wings" by Leo Lionni
Pantheon

Four-star story of a wingless bird who is cared for by others (required because of his handicap). Granted a wish, he is given the gift of golden wings which allow him to soar higher than anyone else. This causes his being shunned by others until he gives the gift of a gold feather to each of many needing persons.

(Ideal story for preaching sharing, helping others, and using talents.)

"Pezzettino" by Leo Lionni
Pantheon

Pezzettino is sure that he's a piece of someone else and searches for that someone. The "wise one" sends him to the island of Wham where he discovers that "I am myself."

(Possible themes are evident from this description.)

"Little Blue and Little Yellow" by Leo Lionni
Ivan Obelensky Inc.

Blue and yellow have a great deal of love for each other and it changes them so that they become like one person.

(Blue and yellow making green is usually told to offset prejudice but the love that blue and yellow share is more to the point. I don't think a child will get this point but it is still an excellent children's story and married couples might.)

"The Hundred Penny Box" by Sharon Bell Mathis
Viking Press

Long (therefore it needs editing for most situations) beautiful story of an old woman and her relationship with her great-great nephew. Aunt Dew is 100 years old, isn't completely with it mentally, isn't completely loved by Michael's mother because she can be a nuisance, but is dearly loved by Michael.

(Excellent for helping young, and older, persons accept and understand the old.)

"The Happy Owls" by Celestino Piatti
Antheneum

All the other barnyard fowl fight all the time except the owls. Why? The owls explain how they enjoy the things of life and gain contentment from nature. The fowl listen politely and decide life can't be that simple so they go back to fighting.

(Are we at peace like the owls—or are we like the other fowl? And is the advice given by the owls similar to the bible and teaching of the Church?)

"Bubba and Babba" by Maria Polushkin
Crown Publishers Inc.

Based on a Russian folktale, two lazy bears go to great lengths to avoid work, especially around the house. Soon they are having a contest being lazy. The kind raccoon shows them the stupidity of their trying to avoid work.

(How are we when it comes to simple responsibilities? If we answer "not-so-good" to that question can we expect a better answer to a question on not-so-simple responsibilities?)

"Jerome" by Philip Ressner
Parents Magazine Press

When a witch tricks Jerome, a frog, into believing that he's a prince, he presents himself to the townspeople. They require him to solve some of the citizens' problems, e.g., a fire-breathing dragon, a corn-eating crow and a wicked wizard. When he shows initiative and solves the problems the people decide that he really must be a prince even though he still looks like a frog.

(And those white things on the altar really aren't bread anymore despite what they look like.)

"Ebbie" by Eve Rice
Greenwillow Books—Division of William Morrow & Co. Inc.

Eddie loses his front teeth and his proper name comes out "Ebbie." He gets older and his second teeth come in but his family continues to call him "Ebbie" despite his protestations. Eddie eventually, and strongly, makes his point.

(Good lesson on growing up or treating people as they should be treated rather than how we remember them from the past.)

"New Kid in Town" by Charles Robinson
Atheneum

The new boy in town meets the challenge of his neighbor but gets the worst of it until he learns to use the situation to his own advantage.

(Good story of getting along with others if one can accept the "need" to fight sometimes.)

"Sam" by Ann Herbert Scott
McGraw-Hill

Lovely story of how Sam is chased away by mother, brother, sister and father. Sam feels unwanted and begins to cry. His crying is heard by the rest of the family who, recognizing their previous shortness with Sam, treat him with attention.

(Do we hear the cries of others even when they are out loud? How about when they aren't out loud?)

"Wizard's Tears" by Maxine Keemin and Anne Sexton
McGraw Hill book Company

The new wizard tries to solve all the town's problems but carelessness with his own magic tears creates a tragedy instead. After all, a wizard's tears are powerful.

(Some people too, with power over other people, like a younger brother, are tempted to misuse that power.)

"The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein
Harper and Row

This story is so good that everyone must read it. It is the story of a tree who is happy when he is able to give all he has in order to please a young boy.

(An obvious parallel with God—always giving, even giving Himself—and the boy, us, always asking for more.)

"The Missing Piece" by Shel Silverstein

Much the same as Lionni's "Pezzettino." It is the story of the search of a piece of something for the whole . . . or is it a piece of something else?

(An excellent study on individuality and community intermingling the two.)

"Why Noah Chose the Dove" by Isaac Bashevis Singer
Farrar, Straus and Giroux

In a fresh and lively approach to the age-old account, the author presents the dialogue of the animals as they vie for a place on the ark. All the animals brag about their talents and importance except the modest dove who says, "Each one of us has something the other doesn't have, given us by God who created us all."

(The above quote sounds like a good theme doesn't it—or do you like modesty better?)

"Mandy's Grandmother" by Liesel Moak Skorpen
The Dial Press

Mandy has never seen her grandmother but excitedly anticipates her visit. The early reaction is adverse because both parties expect something else of each other. The story of how Mandy and her grandmother begin to love and accept each other for who they are is very warm.

(Good for recognizing that we are all different and unique individuals. Can make points to adults, too.)

"Michael" by Liesel Moak Skorpen
Harper and Row

A boy overcomes his fear of thunder to feed a baby rabbit which he has adopted. He also shares a warm moment with his father.

(Story is a little long but is quite good as love story between a father and son.)

"Miranda and the Cat" by Linell Smith
Little, Brown and Company

Miranda loved cats. She was also very lonely. When she discovered the proud alley cat with sharp claws, she determined it should be her friend. Eventually, after feeding the cat and nursing it back to health after an injury, the cat accepts Miranda—but still chooses to be an alley cat.

(Well told story about allowing freedom to and giving respect to the feelings of others.)

"The Lady Who Saw the Good Side of Everything" by Pat Decker Tapio
A Clarion Book. The Seabury Press

Title appropriately describes the story of a woman on a picnic when the rain starts and while we might think that everything goes downhill from there, she accepts and takes pleasure from all her "calamities."

(We must have faith and handle each problem as it comes along.)

"A Boy Once Lived in Nazareth" by Florence M. Taylor. Henry Z. Walch, Publisher.

Somewhat longish story of Jesus growing up. It is easy to skip pages and still tell a good story of what it was like growing up in Nazareth 2000 years ago.

(Suitable for themes expressing the humanity of Jesus.)

"Free to Be You and Me" conceived by Marlo Thomas
McGraw Hill Book Company

1. "Ladies First" by Shel Silverstein
   Intended as a feminist story, this charming story of a selfish young lady who expects to be served by all others by demanding "ladies first" can easily describe selfishness.

2. "No One Else" by Elaine Laron
   Short poem about how we can be taught many things but learn "how you feel is how you feel" by ourselves.

"The Great Big Enormous Turnip" by Tolstoy
All work together to get the turnip up.
(Some of the communistic philosophy is the same as Christian philosophy.)

"Thy Friend Obadiah" by Brinton Turkle
Viking Press
Obadiah was annoyed at the sea gull who followed him around like a pet. One winter day when needing a friend, the sea gull wasn't around and Obadiah missed him. Later, when the sea gull was in trouble and Obadiah was able to help, he discovered how simple and pleasant it is to make a real friend.
(Another possibility for a friendship theme.)

"The Magician of Cracow" by Krystyna Turska
Greenwillow Books
Familar story of someone selling his soul to the devil while leaving strings which he expects will save him. The devil outwits the magician but the magician gets lucky and spends eternity on the moon. A Polish legend.
(Suitable for discussion of temptation, but makes the devil a little dumb.)

"Let's Be Enemies" by Janice May Udry
Harper and Row
Good childlike story of two friends who fight and, like many children, "hate" each other and promise never to be friends again—until they see each other and decide it's more fun to be friends than enemies.
(Simple story with a reconciliation theme.)

"How I Faded Away" by Janice May Udry
Albert Whitman and Company
Unhappy and ignored at school, Robbie fades away. He only becomes visible when he cries or finds something he can do well.
(Excellent story about the kid we all know, who nobody pays any attention to as told from his point of view.)

"The Mean Mouse and Other Mean Stories" by Janice May Udry
Harper and Row
Collection of very short stories about mean people and how they are treated by others.
(Since we are never mean this story cannot be used to make a point—but it is humorous anyhow.)

"Monkey Face" by Frank Asch
Parents' Magazine Press
Monkey has drawn a picture of his mother. He modifies it according to each suggestion made by his friends. Eventually it looks nothing like his mother, but she loves it anyhow.
(And God loves us if we are always honest in our attempt to show Him love and praise—even if we don't always do it correctly.)

"Two Good Friends" by Judy Delton
Crown Publishers, Inc.
Duck keeps his place spotless but has no food. Bear has lots of food—and dirt—to offer his friends. They resolve their differences by sharing

their talents so both can have food and clean plates.

(There are rewards in using our talents by sharing with other people.)

"Will it Be Okay?" by Crescent Dragonwagon
Harper and Row, Publishers

A child has fears about dogs, thunder, snakes and other things. Her mother comforts her and points out the good in all of these things.

(The dedication in this book "To the One who's always with us, whispering 'It's okay!' this book is humbly and lovingly offered" also tells us the moral.)

"Hound and Bear" by Dick Gackenbach
A Clarion Book, The Seabury Press

Hound and Bear are very good friends. Hound is quite a practical joker. He finds out that this joking can hurt their friendship when he carries it too far.

(A good lesson on the value of friendship or the treatment of others.)

"She Come Bringing Me That Little Baby Girl" by Eloise Greenfield
J. B. Lippincott Company

Kevin experiences feelings of resentment at the attention paid to the new baby. His disappointment and jealousy are dispelled as he becomes aware of the importance of his new role as a big brother.

(Ah, the responsibilities of being an older brother or sister—and the challenge to be good at it.)

"A Flea Story" by Leo Lionni
Pantheon

Two fleas share experiences—one always wants to stay where he is, the other always wants to move on and explore other areas. They recognize and accept their differences.

(And we are different too—different in talents, ability, desire, methods. Yet we both can be right. And it is important that we recognize other people's methods and feelings.)

"Monnie Hates Lydia" by Susan Pearson
The Dial Press

Lydia celebrates her tenth birthday putting down her little sister who had worked very hard to make it a happy day. By the end of the day, the little sister has a "need" to get even for the way she has been treated . . . and does.

(Perhaps we need to picture ourselves as Lydia. Do we recognize the needs or attempts of other people?)

"I Don't Care" by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat
MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc.

Jonathan accidently lets his helium filled balloon slip away and get lost. But he doesn't care about his loss; at least that's what he tried to convince everyone else.

(Denying an emotion doesn't make it disappear.)

"I'm Terrific" by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat
Holiday House

Jason Bear thinks he's terrific and even awards himself gold stars for superior performance in his chores. His friends don't like to be around him.

(Pride goeth before the fall.)

"I Do Not Like It When My Friend Comes to Visit" by Ivan Sherman
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

The friend gets to play with all my toys and she has precedence over the owner in using them . . . and the friend plays with exactly the same toys that the owner wants to use and the exact time that the owner wants to use them.

(A lesson, identifiable with the very young, on sharing and jealousy.)

"It's Not Fair" by Robyn Supraner
Frederick Warne

Andrew, the little brother, gets to do "everything" because he's little. Andrew's big sister suffers some of the consequences of his actions, but can't do anything about it.

(A good lesson, with an analogy close to the hearts of older brothers and sisters, on the responsibilities of getting older.)

"Ira Sleeps Over" by Bernard Waber
Houghton Mifflin Company

Do you take your teddy bear when you sleep overnight at Reggie's house? Mother and father say yes—sister says no, he'll think you're a baby.

(Decisions, decisions! Who do we go to for help? What would happen if the decision were wrong?)

"I Was All Thumbs" by Bernard Waber
Houghton Mifflin Company

An octopus who has known only the quiet world of the laboratory tells of his unceremonious introduction to the perils and pleasures of ocean life.

(This well told story can be used for themes on growing up and friendship.)

"Lyle and the Birthday Party" by Bernard Waber
Houghton Mifflin Company

Lyle, always great at pleasing and serving others, experiences jealousy which is diagnosed as a sickness. His short hospital stay allows him the pleasure of freely serving others again.

(Excellent story with a clear point.)

"The Selfish Giant" by Oscar Wilde

Giant does not want children in *his own* garden. Winter comes and stays. Spring will not come because he is so selfish.

(Is selfishness a reasonable theme?)

"The Little Wood Duck" by Brian Wildsmith
Franklin Watts, Inc.

The youngest duck was belittled by his brothers and sisters because he was different—until his particular talent saved them from the fox.

(Recognizing our talents or making fun of handicapped or "different" people—like the sick and the lame—are suitable themes.)

"Finders Keepers" by Will and Nicolas
Harcourt, Brace and World Inc.

When two dogs can't decide which one should have the single bone which they've found, they ask others for help. After being taken advantage of several times, they share the bone and learn that having the bone, or half of it is more important than arguing over a minor problem.

(Sharing always—almost always—is better than fighting.)

"Someday, Said Mitchell" by Barbara Williams
E. P. Dutton and Co. Inc.

Mitchell continually tells his mother what he will do for her in the future. Mother continually points out what he can do for her in the present.

(Nicely done story of doing now instead of promising what we will do—someday.)

"The Cookie Tree" by Jay Williams
Parents Magazine Press

The quiet and tidy village of Owlgate is astonished one morning when a chocolate cookie tree suddenly appears in the village square. A committee of townspeople have diverse opinions on what to do with it and argue. The children, with innocence and simple acceptance, eat all the cookies and the tree disappears.

(Can't you see a cookie tree next to the altar?)

"The Trouble with Alaric" by Jane Williamson
Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Alaric is a mutt who should have everything a dog wants but with the grass being greener and all that, decided he would prefer to be a person. Discovering the responsibilities of people really isn't greener grass, Alaric decides to be what *he* is.

(Be yourself themes.)

"The Judge" by Harve Zemach
Farrar, Straus and Giroux

The judge dispenses "justice" without believing the testimony of those he continues to punish. All of the testimonies are warnings from which the judge, because he ignores them, suffers the consequences.

(Reminds one of the way many people ignored the warnings of the prophets. Offers a challenge, but great visual aids are possible.)

"The Hating Book" by Charlotte Zolotow
Harper and Row

The heroine "hates" her former good friend after the good friend ignores her. As it turns out, the good friend misunderstood the heroine and after the misunderstanding is cleared up, they are friends again.

(Good for themes of communication, understanding, friendship or reconciliation.)

"Do You Know What I'll Do" by Charlotte Zolotow
Harper and Row

Short, easygoing love story of what one who loves another will do to make that other person happy. Understandable by the very young.

(Suitable for themes of love is doing something for others.)

"The Unfriendly Book" by Charlotte Zolotow

Bertha thought she was Judy's best friend and was jealous when Judy played with other kids. Bertha's selfishness and jealousy are displayed by her bad-mouthing some of Judy's other friends. Bertha learns the cost of her selfishness when Judy decides she likes the other people but cannot like Bertha.

(Did you pick up the words jealousy, selfishness and friendship?)

"A Father Like That" by Charlotte Zolotow
Harper and Row

"I wish I had a father. But my father went away before I was born . . ." continues to describe the ideal father.

(Not a simile for God the Father but an appropriate look at us as fathers—do we go away from our children? Are we always good fathers? Excellent presentation.)

"When the Wind Stops" by Charlotte Zolotow
Harper and Row

A small boy asks those questions that all parents know—why does the day end? where does the wind go? We learn that nothing really changes, it just converts into something else.

(Good story for discussing change or death.)

"If it Weren't for You" by Charlotte Zolotow
Harper and Row

Most of the story tells us how "if it weren't for you" things would be much better for me because *I* wouldn't have to share some things. It ends with the realization of the good things *you* offer *me*.

(Good for recognizing the need for others or themes on selfishness.)

"Baboushka and the Three Kings" by Ruth Robbins

A Russian folk tale of the magi looking for the Redeemer and inviting Baboushka, a busy homemaker, to join them. Baboushka is "too busy" to do such things but later has second thoughts and goes off on an endless journey searching for the Christ child and leaving presents along the way.

(Fantastic supplement to the Epiphany.)

These represent only a taste of the stories available at the public library having morals which can be tied into Sunday readings. There really are lots more. Check the various journals which synopsize new publications for children and check out the stories which might be interesting. Don't be embarrassed to sit on the floor of the children's section and look for books . . . and don't get lost enjoying all the stories, remember you're looking for a specific point.

There are other sources of stories which fit themes. Look in the school or CCD office for more and you might find things like:

"Celebration." It's all about celebrating/communion preparation by Winston Press and contains two fine stories:

"The Wooden Rhinoceros" by Patrick O'Brien—a story about signs and friendship and

"Jamie Comes Home" by Kathleen Beal—a story of peace and forgiveness.

Or, the Penance kit, "Walking Together Again" by Mine Publications, Inc., which contains great stories of friendship and reconciliation including:

"The Looking Glass" by Ambrose Bierce, "The Sidewalk Sign" by Judy Posely Galt, "The Ballad of Andy Dimstead" and "The Right Words" by Patrick O'Brien. This packet is a must resource.

Or ask someone about the John the Baptist of the underground, "Hubert the Earthworm."

Or check out the tear jerker Barrington Bunny in "The Way of the Wolf" by Martin Bell if you're looking for a getting down to dying for it theme.

Or the whole Arch Book series (Concordia) of gospel stories.

Or the Joy series of CCD courses which have stories with many of the lessons. Incidentally the themes that these stories fit are right on the front covers.

Or . . . well if you're not in the CCD office yet, it's time to go and see what they have.

None of the above is being recommended (or not being recommended for that matter) for use as a CCD text. Actually it is to your advantage if these books aren't part of the CCD program because it will allow the presentation of new but related material in a liturgy.

If you can't find these particular materials in the school or CCD library you'll probably find something just as good—although it's hard to believe that there's anything better than Hubert the Earthworm or the Ballad of Andy Dimstead. Furthermore, if the above material isn't available suggest to the DRE or CCD coordinator that it's time to upgrade the available resource material.

The last suggested source of children's stories is religious bookstores. Overall, I have two objections to children's books in religious bookstores: 1) it means you have to buy a book that you're only going to use once or twice and 2) I've generally been disappointed in the available material. These two negative factors are not included to suggest that you should not check out the bookstores; they are meant to temper your expectations.

Plays

This is a simple little tossed salad. It is not meant to be a grand production so please don't be scared off. It starts with a little lettuce. Let us see if the readings can be playacted or if some little skit might reinforce the readings. If suitable, tomatoes can be added as moving people with microphones. Tomatoes are followed by croutons which are props and costumes. Croutons need only be very simple things. Finally, add the dressing, which is a rehearsal. Don't ever offer a salad without a dressing.

Most of us tend to be scared off by the thought of undertaking a play because it conjures a vision of a major undertaking. In preparing this material I was amazed at the number of times that I have actually witnessed a play at a liturgy.

Here are some examples of what I call plays:

1. The simplest.

Do any of the readings lend themselves to more than one reader? (Does this make you feel more comfortable about doing a play?) You've probably already done this. So many of the readings can be easily transposed to a simple dialogue form such as a narrator, a Jesus, and a woman at the well. And be sure to look at the first reading too, it's often a natural.

2. One Step Forward.

The next step is only a small one but it really improves the flavor. It is simply doing the readings with motion. Instead of standing at lecterns, the participants move somewhere else and hold microphones instead of lecterns. They also memorize their lines. If a narrator is needed this part can be done from the lectern.

Is it appropriate to dress a little for the parts?

3. A Simple Option.

Tell the story of the readings while some silent participants are acting a part. Maybe there's a prop to help create the desired effect.

A simple illustration of this technique is available at an Epiphany celebration. Imagine three finely dressed kings (look at the church vestments, there really are some fine robes and crowns easy to find) following a star (think now of an invisible fishing line pulley-system moving an overhead star), a spot light and darkened church while telling the story of the wise men. The children will remember the gospel story much better and longer (especially if Father Sullivan is the king wearing a funny crown) than if it is just read to them.

Now wait a minute! Are you thinking that what the kids will remember is Father Sullivan wearing the funny crown and not the Magi worshipping Jesus? If that's your opinion you are not taking advantage of asking the children about what Father Sullivan was really doing in that funny crown. While the subject is easily remembered because of the funny crown, the opportunist will make sure that the funny crown is a way of remembering the celebration of the Epiphany.

4. Getting Ready Plays.

These are simple little preparations for the worship intended to do things such as setting the theme for the worship or to remind us of our sins or that it is Lent or Advent. A "getting ready play" is not normally found in a "getting ready play book." It might be found in a joke or short piece of dialogue humor or a couple of lines from a pamplet. I'll let you think about that one for a while with a reminder to cut out and remember something that you might read which is cute but carries a message. You might be able to use it as a Getting Ready Play.

Another Getting Ready Play is an Advent wreath celebration. Look around for a pamplet or short book with some Advent wreath prayers or celebrations for children.

5. Real Plays.

These can be found in many areas and might be that grandiose production you used to be afraid of or a simple affair. It certainly will require more work than anything mentioned so far but can have a wonderful impact easily justifying that sweat.

The best reference I've come across for these kinds of things came from a Baptist bookstore entitled "Skits, Plays and Projects for Youth Ministries" (see reference in Chapter One). It offers several manageable and meaningful skits.

When embarking on real play presentations start with simple ones first to build confidence. But build to larger productions. You'll find them easier than you expected and very well received.

5. Story Plays.

This is simply taking a children's story and play acting it instead of reading it. While it is a little more difficult than reading a story, it is an excellent presentation method. DON'T SKIP THROUGH THIS ONE QUICKLY; IT IS EXCELLENT!

Look to junior-high students for participants. You might find a gold mine!

6. Puppets.

There's really no need to explain this one. Anyone is capable of painting a couple of socks, decorating a box, making a curtain and speaking lines while scrunched under a table.

Puppet plays can be used to tell the story of the readings, a children's book or even used as a grand production.

7. Magician.

How about a simple magic trick to start off a discussion of faith: (Do you believe I can make this coin disappear?) and doubt (oops, where did that thing go?—and it's right in front of you).

Be very careful that you don't make Jesus out to be a magician, however.

8. TV Shows.

Just imagine on the feast of Christ the King a ninth-grade girl walking front and center while an "announcer" asks, "What is your name please?" And the answer is given, "My name is Jesus Christ." This is repeated with another girl and boy. Sound like a TV show you know?

The announcer then asks the audience (congregation) to listen to this affidavit:

"I, Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. I descended into hell, on the third day rose again from the dead. I ascended into heaven where I sit at the right hand of the Father from where I will judge the living and the dead."

The three Jesus impersonators sit at a table behind the numbers 1, 2, and 3. The following script has been prepared for a single questioner rather than a panel of questioners and is abbreviated by elimination of the words "Jesus Number."

Question 1

Since today is the celebration of Christ the King, would you answer something I used to wonder about when I was a little kid? Do you always wear a gold crown?

#3. No.

#2. After having on a crown of thorns, I kinda avoid all crowns.

Question 2

As a king, how many servants do you have?

#1. Billions.

#2. Since the Emancipation Proclamation, none.

#3. Technically none—just a lot of brothers and sisters.

Question 3

Do you have any brothers?

#1. No. I was an only child.

#2. All of you.

Question 4

Would you give up your kingship under pressure of death?

#1. I think I've already proved that . . . no!

#3. Kings aren't afraid of death.

Question 5.

How did you get to be a king?

#1. My Father made me do it—well, actually I guess I volunteered.

#2. When the job description was given out and everyone saw the bit about dying, I was the only volunteer.

#3. I inherited it. I come from a house of kings.

Question 6

Just whose house do you come from?

#3. The Father's.

#2. Joseph's.

#1. David's.

Question 7

What kind of work does your Father do?

#2. He's a carpenter.

#3. He has sort of an administrative job.

#1. He doesn't have a job, he just looks after his children.

Question 8

You have been called many things besides king, e.g., Prince of Peace, light of the world, what is your favorite title?

#1. The Good Shepherd.

#2. I really like being called "king" best.

#3. Peacemaker.

Question 9

We've wondered a lot if you had any favorites. Like, what was your favorite miracle?

#1. Rising from the dead.

#2. I got a big charge seeing everyone's face when I walked on the water.

#3. Healing children—all of them about the same except the time they laughed at me when I told them the young girl was sleeping when they thought she was dead—I guess that was my favorite.

Question 10

How about a favorite Apostle?

#2. Peter obviously. I made him the boss after me.

#3. No favorites. I didn't play them.

#1. That's tough. Maybe a slight edge toward John.

Question 11

If you were here today, who would your favorite sports teams be?

#2. The California Angels in baseball and the New Orleans Saints in football.

Question 12

When will we see you again?

#1. Sooner than you think.

#3. On judgment day.

"Before we vote on who is the real Jesus Christ, do you have any questions you'd like to ask?"

Can't you just feel the discussion and education possibilities from such a background?

Look at the other TV game shows, too. "To Tell the Truth" is an obvious one. How about the type that rely on filling in a thought based on a survey of people? You could conduct a survey among kids and have an adult fill in the missing words based on what he thinks the kids responded.

Whatever you do, don't rely on natural ability of people to come up with on the spot answers. PREPARE A SCRIPT AND REHEARSE IT. You're really not doing a game show, you're trying to make a point.

Overhead Projector

Offhand I can't think of how an overhead projector might be used by itself although I'm sure anything that can be done on a slide projector can also be done on an overhead projector, but it is excellent as the provider of supplemental visual support.

The key items needed to use an overhead projector are a transparency, an extension cord (usually) and a screen. Don't rule out the 100-foot extension cord that you bought with your electric lawnmower or a blank wall for a screen. Blank transparencies can be cut from those plastic things found in a five-and-dime for book report

covers or single sheet covers cut down the middle—or in half again—however you like or need. You might struggle to find something which flows onto these materials. So far I've found grease pencils and flowing ink (not the ballpoint kind) to be best.

When then, do you use a transparency?

How about when you go to the Archdiocesan CCD office and find a good filmstrip but it's a little too long as is, or isn't available the week you need it? Of course you've answered, "Yes, that's a good time to shorten the filmstrip by copying the pictures or ideas on transparencies." It's also a good time to forget the filmstrip record and use real people for the lines—even if the people are talking into a microphone while hidden from view. So there now, you have one reason for using an overhead projector—when it is a short form substitute for a filmstrip.

A second time to use an overhead projector is as a supplement to a children's story. A couple of pictures of Tico (see "Tico and the Golden Wings" by Leo Lionni) doing good deeds and giving up his golden feathers will make the story more interesting than someone reading it from a book and trying to show the pictures while reading it. It will also allow the entire congregation the opportunity to see some pictures.

The use of an overhead projector as a supplement picture source to a story can also apply to "made-up" situations and even the gospel, too.

*A little personal comment at this point. I don't believe the celebrant should read from a story book. I think he should paraphrase a story. (It *might* be suitable for a lector to read a story directly.) Using an overhead projector while telling the story also allows the celebrant to use cheat sheets, i.e., notes on index cards. As a simple matter of logistics, one index card should equal one overhead projector picture so that the storyteller and projectionist can coordinate.

Next on the list on when to use an overhead projector is any time a visual presentation is necessary. This isn't so different from the first two reasons but it is included in an attempt to expand your thinking about the range of possibilities for using an overhead projector.

Possible areas under this category include presenting key words or statistics—or maybe a cartoon. Statistics sounds like a boring presentation for children but there are valid times to present numbers (ten commandments, how many times do we forgive, how many people . . .) and a little cuteness with an overhead will help. Key words are an obvious use too, especially if there's a play on words like a Carey Landry's song "Reign, Lord" . . . or is it Rain?

My favorite overhead projector use goes like this:

Consider a theme having to do with how we treat other people. The lights are out and a picture of the Peanuts characters is shown on a screen. A voice says:

"Today we are asked to think about how we treat other people, those around us, parents, brothers and sisters, friends, even strangers. In the gospel, Jesus has told us how to treat other people and we're going to talk about that in a minute but first, does anybody know whose pictures are on the screen?" (If you don't get a positive response either your drawing is horrendous or your screen is in the wrong place).

This whole concept was introduced by Charles Short in his book "The Gospel According to Peanuts" (get your library card out again). It is an excellent book because it introduces the concept of Charles Schultz as a modern prophet and shows the opportunity for conveying a gospel message through the Peanuts characters.

You won't find anything directly useable in the Charles Short book. If you're considering using the Gospel According to Peanuts principle as a homily accessory, start with a theme and read hundreds of Peanuts cartoons picking out appropriate ones to make the point of the theme. (Books of Peanuts cartoons are also available in the public library—some in the children and junior sections and some in the adult sections.)

Use a separate picture for each cartoon frame rather than one composite. It makes for a more interesting presentation and prevents people from jumping ahead.

Recognize that Peanuts isn't the only comic strip with possibilities for making points—take a look at Bill Keane's "Family Circus" or "Andy Capp" or "Doonesbury" or "Wizard of Id" or "Crock" or "Beetle Bailey" or "Mary Worth"—hey, there's really a lot of them!

(And you'll find that they excite parents, too!)

Slides

This salad tastes and looks a lot like the overhead projector salad but for some reason or another, slides usually look more professional than a drawing on an overhead projector. The main opportunities for slide presentations are during the readings, a homily or a meditation.

Some people are real nuts about taking pictures and you may find that a friend who has been to the Grand Canyon is a great source of slides. But make certain you never present slides the way your boring neighbor does—with a long explanation over each slide. Like the overhead projector, the slide should normally be a supplemental visual aid rather than an item by itself.

Slide picking and arranging can also be one of those projects that someone else might do on a one-shot basis. In any case, you'll find that preparing a good slide presentation is a tedious project. For this reason I won't even ask you to think of using two projectors at once . . . although if you ever saw a presentation done this way . . .

There are also commercial slide packages. Some of these are just random series of "meaningful" slides and others are packages of slides for a particular reading or theme. There are some fantastic packaged psalm/slide-presentations if you're willing to spend the money.

It's difficult to tell you exactly how to prepare a slide show. There are books on the subject and you can also make your own slides rather inexpensively. All I offer is a reminder to use them and a suggestion of where they can be used. Actually to put together, be it beautiful nature scenes for a psalm, ugly slum scenes for a reading about Jesus curing the sick, pictures of your pastor in action when celebrating his twenty-fifth anniversary, pictures of a family where the parents are celebrating their fiftieth anniversary, something that is suitable for the signs of Baptism (water, cleanliness, community, flame, etc.) or a helpful addition to a homily, *you* will have to pick and prepare the slides.

Here is a sample presentation. It goes with Sandy and Harry Chapin's "Cats in the Cradle" (copyright 1974 by Story Songs, Ltd. ASCAP).

Music	Slide
My child arrived the other day	A new born baby Pregnant woman Another baby
He came to the world in the usual way	another baby Plane
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay	Mastercharge card About a 1½ year old baby
He learned to walk while I was away	Picture of a father's hand and
And he was talkin' 'fore I knew it, and as he grew	baby's hand—six inches apart
He'd say "I'm gonna be like you, Dad	
You know I'm gonna be like you."	Pajamas on a laundry line
And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon	Half moon—with a face on it
Little boy blue and the man in the moon	Boy looking out a window Boy forlornly looking out a screen door
When you comin' home, Dad? I don't know when but we'll get together then	Father eating lunch in a car while reading a note "I love you, Daddy"
You know we'll have a good time then.	Clock
(Slight pause)	Clock
My son turned ten just the other day	10 year old boy
He said "Thanks for the ball Dad, come on let's play	Football Father putting up panelling
Can you teach me to throw?" I said "Not today"	Father opening a box Smiling 10-year-old
I got a lot to do. He said "That's ok"	Another smiling, slightly wistful 10-year-old
And he walked away, but his smile never dimmed	
And said "I'm gonna be like him, yeah	
You know I'm gonna be like him."	
And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon	Teddy Bear
Little boy blue and the man in the moon	Boy in a cowboy hat
When you comin' home, Dad? I don't know when but we'll get together then	Boy at the ocean with a crab Sad boy in a baseball uniform
You know we'll have a good time then.	
(Slight pause)	Clock

Well he came from college the other day	Good looking teenage boy
So much like a man I just had to say	
"Son, I'm proud of you, can you sit for awhile?"	Older man sitting Teenager
He shook his head and said with a smile	Car keys
What I'd really like, Dad, is to borrow the car keys	Car
See you later, Can I have them please?	
And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon	Bubble gum machine Teenager on a beach Teenagers playing volley ball
Little boy blue and the man in the moon	Teenagers talking Car
When you comin' home, Son?	Inside a tunnel
I don't know when but we'll get together then, Dad	White centerline of a road
You know we'll have a good time then.	Clock
I've long since retired My son's moved away	Older man Phone
I called him up just the other day	Older man on phone
I said "I'd like to see you if you don't mind"	Clock Clock

He said "I'd love to, Dad, if I can find the time."	Clock
You see my new job's a hassle and the kids have the flu	Younger man on phone
But it's sure nice talking to you, Dad	Telephone on table
It's been sure nice talking to you"	
And as I hung up the phone it occurred to me	Very old, sad and lonely man
He'd grown up just like me	
My boy was just like me	
And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon	Baby 3-year-old with cat 8-year-old as a clown
Little boy blue and the man in the moon	Pocket watch Wristwatch Teenager
When you comin' home, Son?	Clock Clock
I don't know when but we'll get together then	Clock Digital clock Faces of many children
You know we'll have a good time then.	

Good luck! Remember that once in awhile is enough.

Other Visual Aids

This category of "other" visual aids is like going to a salad bar and finding a whole bunch of specialty salads—but only two things at most and sometimes no combinations that go together. It is not a mix and match salad bar.

These are some of the salads found at the "other" salad bar.

1. Filmstrips

By no means does putting this item on the list first mean that it rates a high priority. If I felt it deserved a high ranking it would have been in a separate category. I have some personal prejudice toward filmstrips and am turned off when I see a filmstrip projector.

I saw a high-school CCD class preparing for a seder meal, which was still a couple of weeks away, by having a two-week lesson on covenant. The lessons consisted of the instructor coming in and turning out the lights, turning on the filmstrip projector and accompanying record player. On came a Cecil B. DeMille version—without the spectacular scenes created by DeMille—of a heavy-handed God telling His people what to do and killing those who got in the way. The only advantage to the lesson is that it provided the class with a community building experience. Unfortunately the basis of the community was lack of respect for an unprepared teacher, mutual distaste of the presentation and whispered conversation (sometimes not even whispered). I don't believe that this build-up helped the eventual seder meal.

The intended point of this rather long digression is to suggest avoidance of the pits of the filmstrips. That is, seeing a filmstrip on the subject of the desired theme, or at least close to it, and showing that filmstrip without first investigating other possibilities. It is my experience that this is wrong because:

1) It gives the impression of little preparation.
2) Most filmstrips are too long even if good.
3) Many filmstrips are outdated or boring.

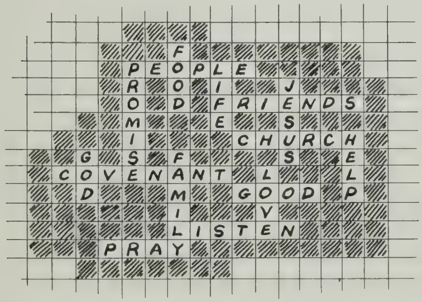
There is no intention to eliminate filmstrips from the list of possibilities. There are some that truly do make a point in a pleasant and effective manner.

Most parishes have an availability of filmstrips for various sacramental or religious education programs; many schools also have filmstrip versions of children's stories. These two areas should be investigated at your own parish, at the neighboring parishes, and through the archdiocese offices which might have some. And don't forget to check ye olde public library again.

If you find a good filmstrip that is just too long, think of what you can do to shorten it rather than showing it as is anyhow or discarding it because of the length. Narrating a shorter version, that means discarding the record and flipping through the discarded picture portion, certainly is a simple way of still using such a filmstrip. Alternatively it is possible to redo the appropriate pictures as slides, drawings, or overhead projector transparencies or to act out the modified filmstrip.

2. Crossword Puzzle

Suppose the theme of the liturgy is Covenant and the celebrant is looking for a gimmick to help his homily. In outlining the ideas that he wanted to present he might ask the question "What is a covenant?" A suitable answer is "A *Covenant* is a *promise* between *God* and *me* and other *people.*" (Notice the emphasized words; they appear again.) Having established the definition of covenant we now can think about what is promised. God promises us many things like life, food, family, friends, Jesus and Church. (I assume you recognize that when talking with kids one wouldn't simply say these things but would lead the response in the desired sequence.) The next part of the discussion centers on my responsibilities to God, such as to **listen** to God's word, to **pray, love** God and others, be **good** as a sign of the love of God and others, and to help others.



I repeat that I don't think I have to expand on what can be used to fill in those ideas. If the homilist can't fill it in, he isn't capable of reaching anyone. The secret is to maintain an order after starting out with an unstarted crossword puzzle and fill it in the order that the words are presented above. Check it out and you'll see that the words build in every case.

All that is needed is that banner board that was discussed in Chapter 1, some lined newsprint with filled in ////// and a thick magic marker.

When the kids get stuck—and even if they don't get stuck—play off the adults in the congregation. You'll be surprised at how much they want to be included and to show off their knowledge too.

3. Newsprint

This is the utilization of the inexpensive material available on leftover rolls from most newspaper publishers or in sheet or book form from artist supply houses or even from moving companies who use it as wrapping paper. From a roll it is suitable for large banners or art decorations which have been pre-prepared or that are being developed during the liturgy by a working group.

Newsprint can be used during the homily, readings, or meditation as an alternative to overhead and slide projectors. A series of pictures on sheets of newsprint mounted on a hard backing or an easel can be supplemental to a storytelling by flipping a page at a time.

Newsprint also can be used to carry a series of pictures or drawings supplemental to the homily. To get the feel of this one, tape record a homily and while listening to the playback, envision helpful sketches or pictures which would enliven the homily by highlighting its points.

Most liturgies are held in places where slate blackboards are not available; newsprint and magic markers are very good substitutes. Simply flip over another sheet instead of erasing the blackboard.

4. Story Supplements

This is an easy category in my mind but a hard one to generalize about. Maybe some examples will make the point best. (You'll have to check out each story first to have these examples mean much to you.)

"Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein

The visual aid can consist of newsprint drawings of a tree stump, the trunk, groups of branches and lots of apples. All the sections must fit together to form one complete tree but because they are in sections, each piece must be removable as the story is told. Temporary joining can be done with dried out glue on both pieces or double faced masking tape.

"Cookie Tree" by Jay Williams

A small tree or large branch carefully placed in a Christmas tree stand or weighted bucket with hanging chocolate cookies is the secret of this visual aid. It accomplishes two things, it makes the story easier to tell and it means that after the liturgy the children are invited to take a cookie.

"Tico and the Golden Wings" by Leo Lionni

There are a couple of possibilities here:

One opportunity is to make Tico as a piñata and have the mess, er, I mean fun, of breaking it afterwards. It really is a fun experience even though care must be exercised in making a piñata strong enough to avoid breaking on the first hit but weak enough not to withstand eternal punishment. Extreme care must be exercised to hit the piñata and not some child.

The second opportunity is a papier mache Tico with a separate golden wing section. The storyteller can start with a wingless Tico, add the golden wings and pull off a feather at a time as Tico gives of himself to those in need.

"Jerome" by Philip Resner

Would you believe a four-foot-high stuffed frog?

Why not? Aren't you doing this to help the kids remember the point?

I hope that these few examples explain the concept and that now you can pick up almost any children's book and come up with a clear visual item and can fashion such an item. Also, remember this area if you're considering giving the children something to take home.

5. Other Puzzle Type Things

In addition to crossword puzzles consider an anagram (hidden word) puzzle, a secret message (24=A, 7=B, 20=C, etc.) or a series of scrambled words. These can be done on 8½ x 11 inch mimeographed sheets to be brought home or solved in a classroom setting. Or, perhaps, solved in a contest between two teams, after displaying the puzzle on the blackboard or on newsprint. Typically it seems that this must be limited to a smaller group situation.

6. A Potpourri of Other Things

A suitcase. Counting our blessings is an example of a theme using this prop. Image the homilist walking in with a battered old suitcase representing his battered old body. Upon opening the suitcase he discovers a whole bunch of things he has to be thankful for—things that God has blessed him with. (A family portrait, a diet book, a beloved hat which bring him fond memories, etc.) Doesn't this sound like a good way to promote an enthusiastic response?

A wrapped present. A similar, but perhaps more formal presentation of the above. Inside are all of the good things God has given us, or allows us to have.

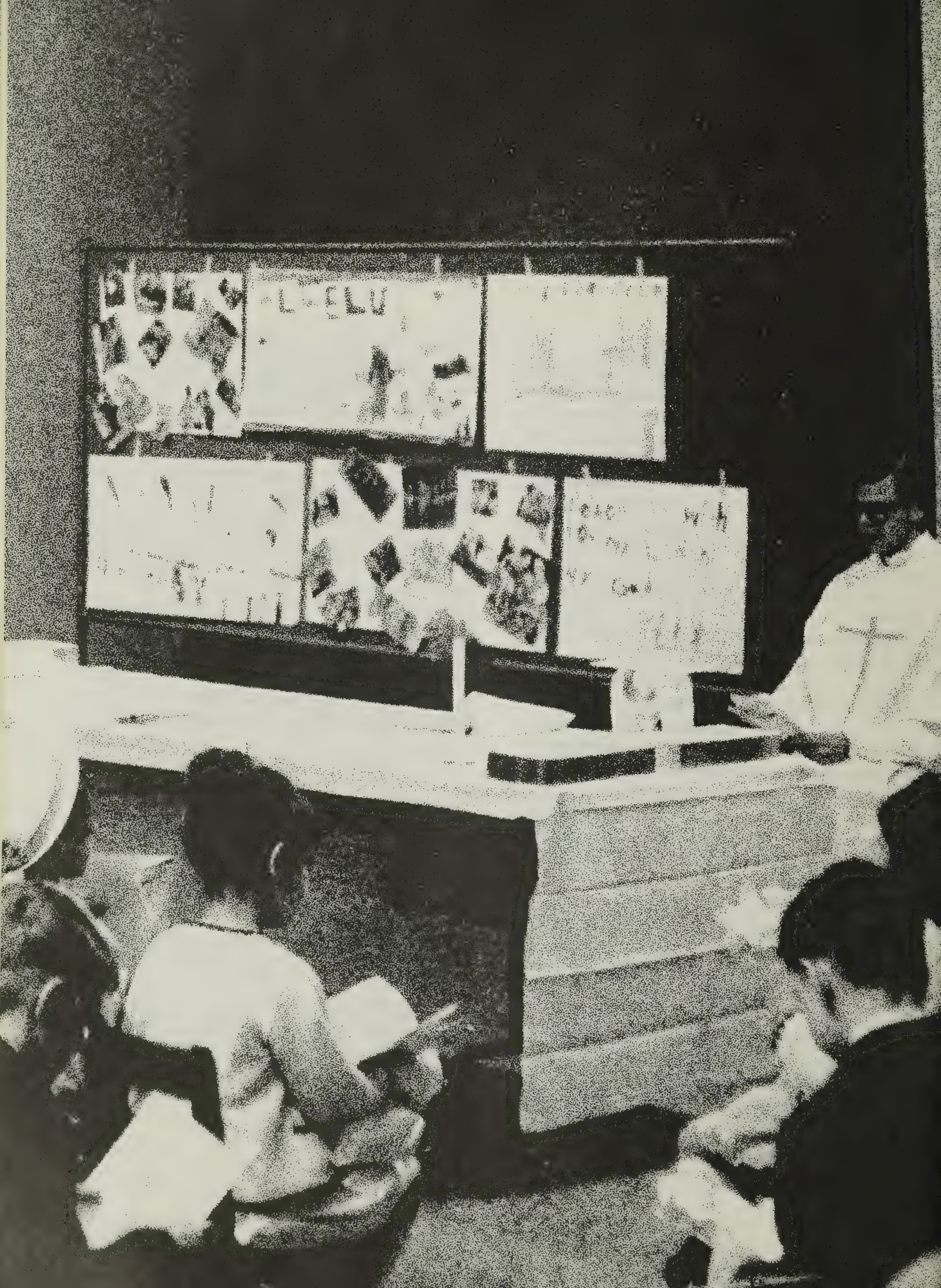
An umbrella. Imagine opening a well-prepared umbrella and having all of these things shower out on you. If you're keeping with the blessing theme, the shower can represent the blessings God continues to shower on us (although it may be hard to fit a parent in an umbrella).

Hand Puppet. I'd be surprised if you found an accomplished ventriloquist to deliver the homily but a hand puppet could be an interesting supplement to the homilist.

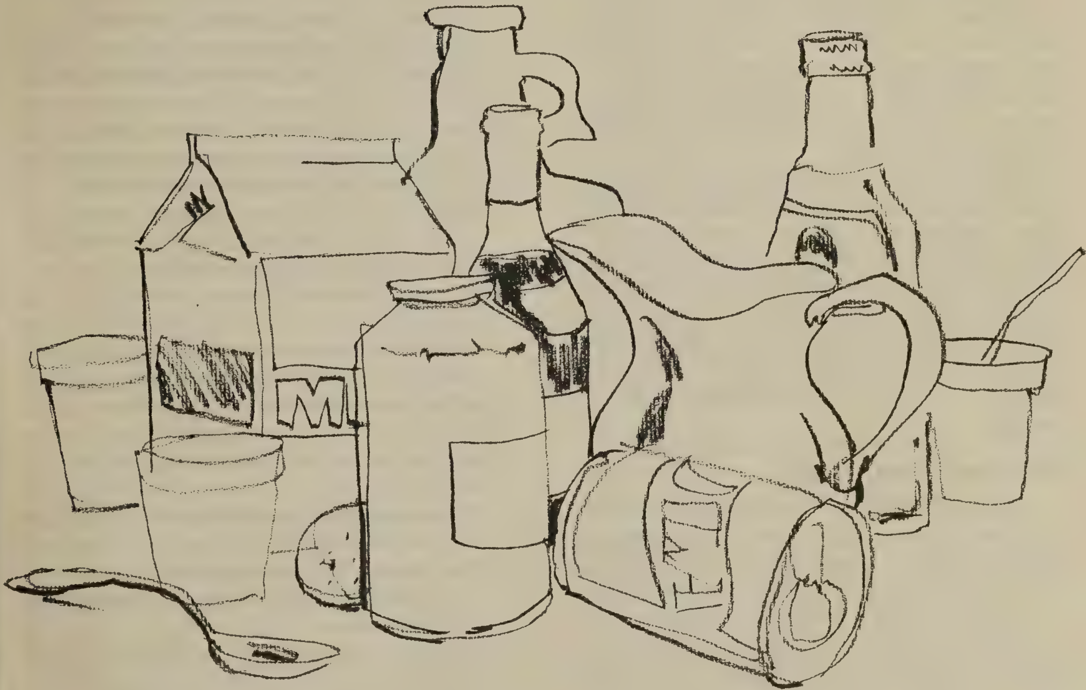
Helium Balloons—regular balloons too. A warning here about the potential danger of poorly used balloons. Imagine handing everyone a helium balloon each with a gift of the Spirit written on it; or having each person write his or her own request to God on the balloon or on a piece of paper attached to each balloon, and releasing the balloon at the Offertory and watching them ascend toward heaven (people still think of heaven as being up).

Chain. This is a natural for a community theme or a theme to show strength. It presents an involvement possibility either by requesting the congregation to bring a link and putting them together before the liturgy or by inviting the children to put their names or their wishes or their thanks or whatever on links and putting the chain together as a decoration.

Broken Plate, Cup, Table, Ripped Vestment. The impact of sin can be shown by the celebrant entering with broken equipment and/or ripped vestments. Opens for discussion the ideas of repairing these items (and doing it with the vestments and equipment) and showing that like sin all things can be repaired—some as good as new but some with weaknesses or cracks that we have to watch out for. Also allows discussion on the quality of that repair—or reconciliation.



Chapter 5
VARIATIONS



Beverages

Stop and think a minute about all the possibilities for beverages . . . . I'll wait . . . .

I'm sure you named water, milk, tea, coffee, hot chocolate, chocolate milk, cola, grape soda, cherry soda, root beer, beer, ale, whiskey, gin, chocolate milkshakes, wine, lemonade, Dr. Pepper, orange juice, pineapple juice, strawberry milkshakes, grape kool-aid and cough syrups—but how about the tough ones like coconut milk and melted ice cream?

This chapter on beverages is about all those miscellaneous things that don't seem to be categorized elsewhere. But this chapter covers only things that are obvious, much like the first list of beverages. To take care of the less obvious, *you* will have to dig deeper. I truly hope that after reading this chapter you'll say to yourself, "Ha! He missed a bunch of things, like . . ." That will mean you recognize that much, much more is possible.

Dialogue Homilies

This one is like water—obvious and essential.

A dialogue homily is the single best method of teaching the Good News to children. It is teaching the way Jesus taught. It is also a great tool to help the children take part in the worshipping community. Furthermore, it will have a residual effect at regular liturgies because a child will better know a particular priest and will be more willing to listen to his regular homilies.

It is essential that a dialogue homily be done correctly. Some hints on "doing it right," most of which are gained from the experience as an observer seeing it done wrong and listening to negative expressions by kids are:

1. A dialogue is done by sitting on the floor with the children, not from a pulpit.
2. A dialogue is done by talking *with* kids, not *to* them.
3. A dialogue is talking about something that is interesting to *both* parties.
4. A dialogue is held at a discussion capability level of both parties.
5. A dialogue with children is an extremely effective way to reach the adults.
6. A dialogue can usually be started more easily by using a supplemental form of communication, such as a story or something visual.
7. A dialogue can place tremendous pressure on a celebrant, particularly when there is a misbehaving child or long pause. The celebrant must be careful not to transfer any of that pressure onto the children.
8. A dialogue that is forced or too long becomes boring.
9. A dialogue needs preparation by the main person so that this person has several avenues of escape in case the first road is boring.
10. A dialogue homily should not always be the only difference between a children's and a regular liturgy.
11. A dialogue homily should not be used at *every* children's liturgy.
12. Occasionally, but only occasionally, the dialogue leader might be someone other than the celebrant.
13. A dialogue homily will help establish the celebrant in his correct role as leader and participant in the celebration.
14. The celebrant must be sure that the entire congregation is aware of all that is said. This will require holding a microphone in the right place or repetition of statements.
15. A celebrant can joke or laugh at funny comments but he must *never* embarrass or make a child feel uncomfortable.

Invite Children to the Altar

Inviting everyone to stand around the altar during the entire celebration is a common practice in home or class Masses. There are good reasons to invite children to join the celebrant around the altar during regular parish Masses, too, particularly during a children's liturgy. The positive aspects are that the children will have a more complete awareness and interest in the celebration. They will normally show better attention, too. Potential hazards are bad bahavior, showing off, accidents and blocked vision or distractions to the rest of the congregation.

As an alternative to standing around or leaning on the altar, the youngsters can be invited to sit on the floor in front of and around the altar. Before doing this, make sure that they will be able to see the celebrant. Some altars preclude seeing the celebrant from this position. It is best not to learn from experience the disaster of children in view of the congregation but not in view of the celebrant.

Another consideration is the length of time that the children remain around the altar. Extremes are start-to-finish on the maximum side and solely for a dialogue homily on the minimum side. Other reasonable times start at a dialogue homily and end at or before communion. I suggest that it is best if the time during which the children gather round the altar is varied from liturgy to liturgy.

Kiss of Peace

Were you wondering how to get rid of all those youngsters from the front of the altar? After the celebrant wishes them peace and they get a chance to shake one another's hands they can go back and give Mom and Dad a kiss. The procedure will promote the community greeting of peace and solve the "what do we do with them during communion problem?"

The celebrant must be cautious that the sign of peace be completed within a reasonable time. Sometimes the celebrant greets 100 people and the typical member of the congregation greets three and impatiently waits for the celebrant.

Our Father

Did you ever join hands at the Our Father during a good liturgy? It is a great feeling.

Did you ever join hands at the Our Father during one of those infrequent poor liturgies that you've attended? It feels forced and uncomfortable.

Occasionally inviting the children and the congregation to hold hands while we pray as Jesus taught us can help promote a community feeling. The cautions are that the celebration must be a good one and that fifth graders be relieved of having to hold hands with a peer of the opposite sex.

The Our Father also presents an opportunity to invite the children to rejoin their families so that families can offer this prayer together.

Kid Lectors

What can be more fitting than children doing the readings at a children's liturgy?

Whoever serves as lector must be prepared ahead of time. This is especially true of kids. Bible words can be more difficult than they are used to and unpracticed phrases will be incomprehensible to listeners. Child lectors can be very cute but it is absolutely necessary that the message of the readings remain meaningful. This means that a child must practice until able to clearly read the message.

It also must be recognized that boys and girls tend to be shorter and quieter than adults (despite your skepticism about the quieter part).

This can be overcome by correct microphone positioning or a box to stand on. Include this preparation when planning ahead.

Music Specialties

As earlier stated, I feel that children's liturgies generally tend to overemphasize music. This criticism is based on the large number of songs and verses that the children are expected to sing. I don't believe this is using music to its best advantage or even for its intended purpose.

It is not necessary that the entire congregation always sing an opening, Offertory, communion and closing song. Planning music for a liturgy should not be a "filling in the blanks" on a checklist that includes these four times, a response between the readings, an anamesis, and a holy, holy. There are other times when music is appropriate and many groups miss those opportunities. If your congregation has never sung Sister Janet Mead's version of the Our Father (that's the one that was popular a few years ago) you'll be amazed at their enthusiastic response when it is started.

In addition to the Our Father, consider the Gloria, Creed and Lamb of God. If children's Eucharistic prayer is used, most demand sung responses. Check with the celebrant ahead of time.

Also consider including a song without congregational involvement, i.e., a song done by an individual or the whole musical group. An instrumental can be effective. And don't be afraid to include a record once in a while.

The secret to the presentation of music is variety. Don't sing at *every* possible opportunity *every* time—but don't miss an opportunity to sing. Recognize the intent of music and its proper place in liturgy and most importantly, recognize that music is prayer, not performance.

Take the Youngsters Out Somewhere

I CONSIDER THIS A "BIGGIE." FOR LITURGIES WITH MIXED CONGREGATIONS, I RECOMMEND DOING IT 30-50% OF THE TIME.

This probably isn't the first time you've heard this idea.

When dealing with an age-integrated congregation there are major advantages to taking the children out of the liturgy during the Liturgy of the Word and working with them in smaller groups according to age. This procedure allows working with small homogenous groups. It is a pressureless situation for both children and leader. It is a comfortable setting. It allows the ability to introduce theme-reinforcing crafts.

The actual mechanics must be a function of the congregation size, available working talent and space. Following is an example which might best describe both mechanics and concept. This example relates to the banner example with the theme "Jesus called the Apostles; He Calls Us."

Remember that this is *example,* not a rule!

After the usual small opening procession consisting of servers, lector, deacon and celebrant, the celebrant greets the congregation, gives a brief explanation of what is about to happen, and tells the youngsters to clear out. The mechanics of clearing out consist of asking all kindergarten, first and second-graders to exit through a specific door where they are met by a visible leader. (If you're skeptical that this age group will be shy about following this direction the first time, you will be surprised by the complete lack of hesitation.) The visible leader and a helper then lead this group to a class or meeting room.

After the youngest group has had a few seconds headstart toward the door, the celebrant

then directs the third through fifth-graders toward a different designated door and another visible leader. After another slight pause, the sixth through ninth-graders are asked to go to a third door and visible leader.

When they get to the classrooms, the Liturgy of the Word continues aimed at the specific age levels represented. For this theme, the K-2 group can hear Leo Lionni's story of "Swimmy" followed by a simplification of the gospel of the calling of the Apostles (John 1, 35-42). The story of "Swimmy" is a natural for leading into this gospel. It will help simplify a discussion on the meaning of being called and the recognition that we are all called to do God's work. The readings and discussion are supplemented by a little craft (it is as easy to do a craft in this setting as it is difficult to do in a church) with each child cutting out a preoutlined fish. Printing their names on their fishes and pasting these onto the form of a big fish will reinforce the theme and involve the boys and girls in a minor commitment to the gospel message.

In the meantime in grades 3-5, the first reading, the calling of Samuel (1 Samuel 3, 3-10, 19) can be play acted by an invisible God, Samuel and Eli. There's no need for a narrator. This is followed by the gospel and a short discussion. The culmination of the discussion is the summary "JESUS CALLED THE APOSTLES; HE CALLS US" written on a blackboard. Next, point out that all over the place (literally) are words (about 150 total) and tell the children that there will be a reward for each child who finds one of the seven words shown on the blackboard. There will be a little scurrying to find key words and the prize is the right to participate in the Offertory procession. All the words in the group of 150 should come close to the right spelling but only one each of the seven final words should be available. Each premade word should be about three inches high. Don't tell the boys and girls ahead of time what the prize is.

A more mature discussion takes place among the oldest group who also hear the callings of Samuel and the Apostles. This discussion is followed by a search through precut pictures of people doing everyday things which are a part of doing God's called work. The children can present the pictures and place them into a collage. You determine the shape of the collage by having a large fish shape available as the background.

Exactly 30 minutes after this begins, the boys and girls are ushered back into the church while the collection is being taken up. Except for those participating in the Offertory procession (two young children carrying the outlined shape of "Swimmy," seven medium-sized children carrying the words, and two older children carrying the collage, as well as another one or two from each age group carrying the other gifts) everyone else goes back to their seats.

What happens in the church while the boys and girls are out? Since there are no children between the ages of four and 14 there can be an R rated homily.

I hope you've noticed that in this example four separate groups approached the same message but each at their own age level. There is a great deal of effort and several people needed to effect a liturgy where groups are formed but the possibilities and reward are worth the effort. There is nothing that can be done in a classroom that can't be done in church but many things, particularly crafts, are simpler in the classroom setting.

Following is a list of suggestions and warnings for the "take the youngsters out somewhere" procedure:

1. It takes a lot of people. I recommend a minimum of one adult leader and one helper. It is desirable to also have a religious representative. A youth can serve as helper and the word "adult" describes a maturity not an age. The minister should also participate. Each group *must* get together ahead of time and know who does what.
2. Avoid an atmosphere which might lead the children to feel like they are attending a school or CCD class.
3. Preparation is absolutely necessary—even more so than normal—because of the fixed time schedule. If your material runs short you can be in trouble, but if it runs long it is even worse.
4. Don't overkill this fine method of celebration.
5. Make sure the congregation has an understanding of what is happening to and with the children.
6. Correlate what is happening in each classroom. Don't work with different themes for each age group. Use the same theme but direct it to each age level according to comprehension levels (including adults).
7. Occasional theme banners in pieces (such as that described under "Swimmy") and processions are suitable visual results of the separation.
8. Each group of boys and girls must be of reasonably close ages. Groups should be 10-25 in size. You may have to guess when you first start.
9. This type of liturgy also presents the opportunity to involve people on a one-shot basis. Explain that carefully and you should find a great willingness.
10. Use youth as a resource for helping in the classrooms. You might find them to be great leaders.
11. Timing is a key. Synchronize watches with the leaders of each age group and the celebrant. Have a clear understanding of when you are returning.
12. There's no need for all the children to go out all the time. Be flexible. Perhaps the in-church Liturgy of the Word can be aimed at the six-seven year old and the other kids can go out.
13. There can be great peer pressure among teenagers not to be involved in something like this. Recognize their values even if you don't agree with them.
14. Going out on the lawn in nice weather is a suitable substitute for a classroom.
15. Might it be possible to take the adults out in small groups sometimes?
16. The liturgy normally runs a *little* longer when you take the children out. If the celebrant is ill-prepared and boring, he will be boring longer than usual.
17. There are fantastic adult possibilities for a clever and willing celebrant when the children are all gone.
18. Classrooms aren't essential; look around for meeting rooms and so forth; every church has other space.
19. I can't imagine a regular parish liturgy when the children and adults should be separated for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
20. An appropriate time for letting the children reenter the congregation is during the collection since there is a little basic commotion

then anyhow. Be sure to keep them quietly outside if you arrive and find the Prayer of the Faithful still going on.

21. Have an usher or someone warn those in the classroom when the Creed starts in the church.
22. Don't normally figure on including the Creed in the classroom. If you're a little early include a statement of faith. If you're a little short of time skip the Prayer of the Faithful.
23. A celebrant finding himself with a little extra time might throw in the announcements while waiting for the boys and girls to return. The celebrant must have confidence, however, that the leaders will see that the children are on time. He should not wait until the boys and girls are in the doorways before starting the Creed.
24. Limit the time in the classrooms to a reasonable time. You might get away with the entire liturgy running five minutes later than normal but any more than that could bring problems.

Take the Youngsters Out Somewhere and Rotate Them

This is the same thing as the previous section except the beverage requires stirring.

Imagine a circle—or a square—or even a rectangle composed of four rooms. After starting with all the kids together, break them into four groups. Send each group to a different room where they spend exactly four minutes. At the end of four minutes rotate each group clockwise (or counterclockwise, I don't care so long as *you* know the system) into the next room. Repeat this operation every four minutes, allowing an additional one minute movement interval, until each group has visited each room or work area.

Total elapsed time is 19 minutes.

Question: What do you do for four minutes four times?

Answer: Various parts of the Liturgy of the Word.

Some of the things that could be done are:

1. A penitential reflection to slides and music.
2. A glorious song of praise.
3. A puppet play of a supplemental theme story.
4. A mime presentation of an Old Testament reading.
5. A grand production of the gospel reading.
6. A four-minute homily.
7. A four-minute craft representative of the theme.

This is not a total list; rather it is a list of some possibilities meant to stir *your* creative juices.

The advantages of rotations are:

1. Quality. You ask someone (four someones or groups of someones actually) to prepare a four-minute presentation rather than a nineteen-minute presentation. They simply repeat the same four-minute presentation with each group. People can prepare an excellent presentation if it is only four minutes long.
2. Movement. The children are moving and alive.
3. Attention span. It is easier to capture continuous attention for four minutes than for sixteen minutes.
4. Quantity. It involves more people and gives you the chance to ask someone new for a small commitment (four minutes won't scare too many people). It also gives a smaller quantity of children in each group.

The disadvantages of rotation are:

1. Timing. Four minutes must be exact. All children must be moving at the same time or chaos will result. This problem can be avoided or minimized by placing a person with a hand bell

in a central location. A loud ringing means "your four minutes just started." A short ding-a-ling three and one-half minutes later means "you're getting close to the end." A loud ringing thirty seconds after this means "it's over, move those kids out, get ready for the next group, you have sixty seconds!"

2. Confusion. The first group of boys and girls will follow the proper sequence but everyone else will be out of sequence at some time. Recognize this, and adjust any opening statements accordingly, e.g., if a mini-homily is being presented to a group of children who haven't heard the gospel and/or supplemental reading, the homily must recognize this.

Additional confusion will occur if the children aren't aware of the system. Explain it carefully before sending them to the first room.

3. Disparity of ages. If the four groups of children are each different ages and the four presentations are fixed, some presentations will not reach some boys and girls. This beverage may work best at a grade level liturgy (or two grade levels)—or you might do it with adults.

Don't simply shrug off this procedure as impossible for an assortment of ages, but please recognize the dangers.

4. Exhaustion. After doing this you'll find that all responsible will be exhausted. Happy—but exhausted.

After finishing this glorious experience, and you will find that, properly planned, it is a glorious experience, have the children join at a central meeting point and participate in the Prayer of the Faithful. Finally, the entire group can become part of the Offertory procession (can there be a connection here with banner making suggestions of Chapter 3) and return to the place where the Liturgy of the Eucharist can begin.

Answering Questions Homily

Children and adults, too, can have lots of questions about a particular religious subject. The intelligence of those questions depends a lot on their degree of interest and their knowledge of the subject.

It is almost impossible to have good questions when prethought is not allowed. In other words, don't expect children, or adults, to respond when you come out of the blue and say "Okay, today, good people, I am going to answer all your questions on the Assumption of Mary. Who has the first question?"

I suggest that an occasional homily used to answer questions might be a suitable homily for a children's liturgy. There are several good ways of doing this; the one included in the preceding paragraph is normally a bad way of doing it. A couple of suitable ways are:

Use a school or CCD class and, while working with a particular theme, ask them to think of any questions they might have on this (doctrine) (tradition) (rule).

Some issues have clear questions which are repeatedly asked, e.g., the historic and future roles of women in the Church and why present limitations exist. A celebrant could actually prepare a list of questions with no outside help.

Publicize in advance that the homily next Sunday will be, for example, "all those things you wanted to know about the Assumption of Mary but were afraid to ask" and ask people to bring their questions. The questions can be written and placed in a box in the back (preferable) (make sure you leave a box, pencils and paper in the back) or asked from the congregation (not as good).

It is desirable to screen questions before they are asked publicly to avoid either deliberately inflammable and ridiculous questions or personal statements on issues.

It should be obvious that topical and controversial subjects will be received more enthusiastically than those with little argumentative content. In other words, women in the Church is a better topic than the doctrine of Mary's Assumption. The value of using this technique with certain age groups rather than across entire congregational lines should also be apparent. This can be accomplished during a "take the youngsters out somewhere" liturgy.

Public Opinion Homily

I once heard a homily using a tape from the "Sunshine Club" (our senior citizen group) in which people each gave their opinions on the benefits of the group. It was very impressive.

Why not utilize the same concept by getting the boys and girls to offer opinions on something like:

"What America means to me"
"Things my mother does that I like"
"Things my mother does that irritate me most"
"A good father is . . ."
"Things about church that bug me are . . ."
"I think the purpose of the Transfiguration was . . ."

These few starters should stir your thoughts about the possibilities that can be used (check your theme) to present a homily in tape recorded form. They might be used to start the homily or the dialogue homily or, if self-explaining, might be the homily. You might also add appropriate slides to accompany the tape recording presentation.

There are clear danger areas in such a presentation:

Overkill

- too many people saying the same thing over and over even if in different words.
- the homilist saying the same thing that the people have just said through the medium of the tape recorder is extraneous . . . and boring.
- one or two long-winded responses are not nearly as effective as several short comments.

Reality

- the topic must be timely. "What America means to me" isn't appropriate on Pentecost.
- the answers have to be real. A lot of teenagers telling about the fun they have every Sunday at Mass will hardly be credible.

Edit

- the problems are solvable and the presentation will be appropriate if the tapes are edited so that the repeaters and bores are eliminated.
- the topic is suitable,
  it belongs in church,
  it isn't done every week.

Ranking

Can you come up with 5-10 ideas relating to a question such as "things to get excited about," "what can I do when I see someone stealing a candy bar?" or "what can I do after stealing and eating a candy bar?" They're the easy ones. Now look at your Sunday theme—can you come up with comparable questions?

This idea allows another form of public opinion to enter the homily. It asks the entire or certain

members of the congregation to rank things in order of (what they believe is important) (what they think people would do when confronted with a certain situation) (what they themselves would do when confronted with a certain situation). The ranking tabulation should occur before the homily and the homilist should incorporate the response in his talk.

(A large newsprint sheet, blackboard or overhead projector with the results allows better congregational understanding.)

Liturgical Clarification

Visual aids are very effective in presenting an idea. Using the very obvious visual aids when working with a sacramental theme or a portion of the Mass theme is frequently overlooked. The obvious visual aids might be:

- all the things used at Baptism or Confirmation with an explanation of each,
- things that a priest uses,
- vestments worn at Mass,
- various statues and windows presenting Mary in her various manifestations.

Things Specific Children Can Do Ahead of Time

A school or CCD class project—or maybe one particular family project—can be incorporated into a liturgy. Any normal work including cleaning up afterwards and special preparation such as preparing activities, drawing fish, making banners and being part of a play are obvious and are simple uses of resources. A few other uses of such persons include:

- making candles for the liturgy (not buying them),
- preparing and reading the Prayer of the Faithful,
- making bread for the Eucharistic sacrifice,
- special song.

An Advent Greeting

More than any other time of year, Advent is when we must wake up to prepare for a new coming of Jesus. And what instrument is most used for waking up?

Would you dare invite the congregation to stand and greet the celebrant (just kind of ignore an opening song) and then have no celebrant? How long would it take the congregation to get fidgety?

Now you need a loud, ringing alarm clock carried by an outgoing soul saying in a loud voice, "Wake up, it's Advent. Wake up to the fact that Jesus is coming. Wake up to Jesus in your life."

Now it's time calmly to start the liturgy. If the opening song is a familiar one it will be sung with volume and spirit.

Use the Lights for Effect

This needs no explanation—it's just a reminder that if you're trying to create a quiet atmosphere soft lights can help, or if the theme is on blindness . . . as I said, it doesn't need explanation.

The possibilities and dangers of using candles effectively are also without need of explanation.

One hint about flame: (do you need a reminder of the connection between flame and the Spirit?) a can of sterno is more effective than a candle.

Scavenger Hunt

Do you see anything wrong with a small group of children hunting through the church (there

will be some noise and maybe some running) for appropriate items? Of course you can always use the lawn.

Another supplementary activity to start or reinforce the homily is a scavenger hunt, i.e., looking for specific objects that relate to a theme or which can be used to make a point. It seems that a couple of thoughts such as the following should start you thinking of many possibilities:

- Easter egg hunt (this is not an original idea). An alternative to the traditional egg or candy is a plastic egg with a butterfly or some other traditional Easter sign inside.
- Discover yourself theme. Chasing around for a bunch of weird items may make it easier for a homilist to make a point about how we must search for awhile to find our capabilities, etc.—could this same concept be used for a discovering God theme too?

Sin Burial Service

This one gets overkilled someplaces by happening every year in a CCD class even though it happened in someone else's class the year before. It certainly can be effective if not done too frequently, and if it is done correctly.

It consists of working with a "sorrow for sin" theme. It requires serious thought about our faults with a self-examination to determine our most serious or repetitive sin. Then, with greatly valued privacy, individuals involved write the sin that they will try to avoid and/or are now expressing sorrow for on a piece of paper (as well as in their hearts). Either of two methods of disposal of the sin is possible—burying them along with the other sins of our community in a hole (see the opportunity for an outdoor procession) or burning it along with the other sins of the community.

Properly done this can make a great impression and hopefully stir the action that is desired, i.e., future avoidance of this fault. Improperly done, it can be a tragic experience. Tragedy will occur if confidentiality does not exist; there must be sufficient distance between anyone writing his sin and anyone else to ensure absolute privacy. Each "sinner" must directly dispose of his sin rather than give the paper to another person. It also must be a quiet and reverent ceremony or self-conscious jokes will destroy the atmosphere.

A Challenge from the Congregation

A friend described this event that occurred at his church one Sunday and had the congregation on the edge of their seats.

The minister was starting a dry sermon on I don't remember what but it could have been the need for charity, when from out of the congregation came the loud sarcastic voice of a teenager, "Are we going to hear this one AGAIN?" Imagine what this might do to a semi-somnolent church!

It takes little imagination, just a good pair of people, to bring this to a two-way discussion of (the need for charity). If well done, the homily will long be remembered by people who otherwise might have been only semiconscious.

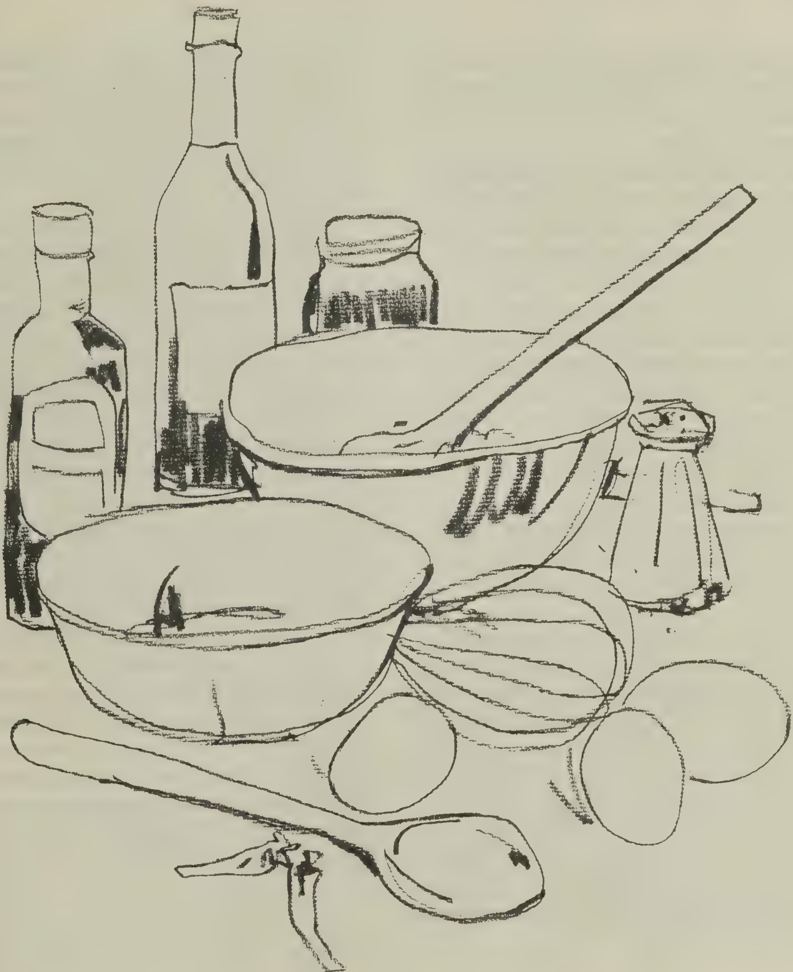
A presentation of this type requires absolute preparedness by both parties so that it is not obviously staged and a final explanation that it was staged lest someone try it truly unexpectedly the next week. It is also suggested that young children might best be in a classroom when this is happening in the church.

Do you dare risk this as a way of making a point with teenagers (adults too)?

I hope so.



Chapter 6
MEDITATIONS



Sauces

The little extra dressing or spice . . . or sauce that even though it has a distinct taste of its own, brings out and improves the taste of the basic ingredient is a meditation.

This should occur as a quiet time or a period of reflective thought after Communion and before the closing prayers. I define the time because some places never pause at this important moment.

The two acceptable choices at meditation time are to be quiet and, secondly, to do something productive. An unacceptable choice is to do nothing, that is, to hurry and clean up after Communion and then get into the announcements or closing prayer. Another unacceptable choice for a meditation is to do something just for the sake of doing something.

The requirements for a meditation are that it be respectful, short, fitting and well-done. (Come to think of it these are good requirements for many things.)

Respectful doesn't mean solemn, it means . . . well, respectful. It means that if it is a period of silence the celebrant and the others on the altar sit there reflectively thinking not paging through the announcements or missalettes.

There is no reason why the meditation can't be cute and still be thought provoking. It shouldn't be a heavy sauce smothering the flavor of the main dishes or such a spicy sauce that it shocks the taste out of the main dish. It may also be necessary, for awhile, to explain to the children that a meditation is about to occur.

The next requirement is time. A meditation must assume the importance of a sauce and be a short additive. Silent meditation should be just a minute or so, especially with children. Other meditations should be no more than three of four minutes long.

"Fitting" is also a requirement for meditations. This is another of those self-evident requirements but it is more less-restrictive than you'll probably first think. Fitting not only covers that the meditation tie in with the theme of the liturgy but also allows anything fitting for that day. A couple of examples of this last statement are: in May, even though the theme of the liturgy is something else, a meditation about Mary is fitting; on July 4—that one needs no further explanation; if there is a First Communicant he/she might be singled out in the meditation; if there is a wedding anniversary which might only have been mentioned in passing during the liturgy, an appropriate meditation is certainly necessary; or how about Father's Day?

The fourth ingredient for a good sauce is called well-done. Meditations handed to the lector on his way to the altar with a, "Hey, read this after Communion" usually come out quite raw. Remember that people are starting to be anxious about "when is this liturgy going to end?" and a sermony, poorly presented or a long meditation is going to agitate and leave a bad taste.

A Mass which includes all ages but has been designated a children's liturgy still can include an adult meditation. Think of adults for most meditative periods.

Here are some suggestions for meditations:

1. Reflective silence.

2. Music. This is presently the most common meditation medium. It can consist of organ music, a folk group instrumental, a solo singer, a choral arrangement or congregational singing. Any of these are acceptable though, personally, I normally object to congregational singing during a meditation period. I also, personally, prefer a soloist at this time.

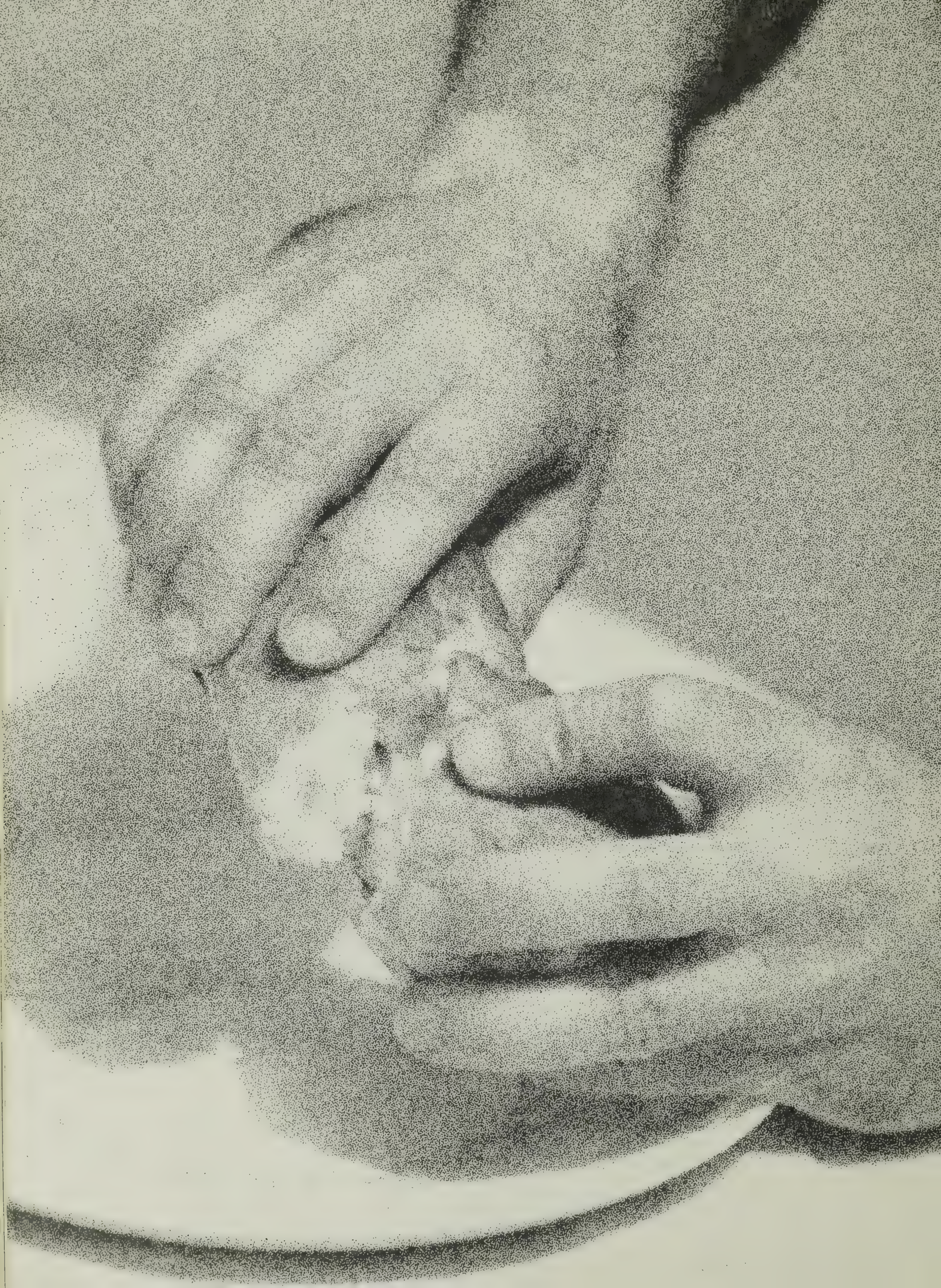
There is also nothing wrong with a recording for a meditation. Not only can "heavy" songs be included on a record, so can the favorite song of the anniversary couple being honored. It is also important that the words be done especially clearly. In any event, extreme care must be exercised lest the meditation become a performance rather than a reflective experience.

3. Slides. These can form excellent supplemental or even primary meditative media. Especially consider their use when honoring people.

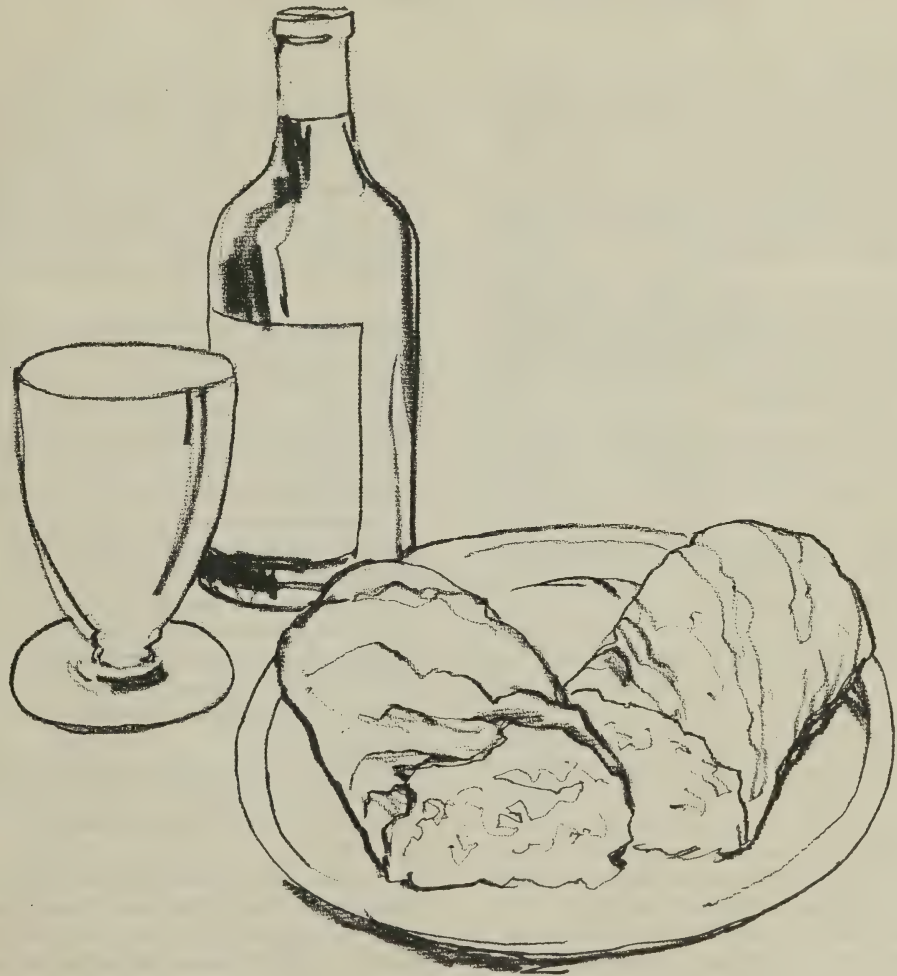
4. Read meditation. This is the hardest type to write about because so many are available. It is simply a matter of finding them. Some places where they can be found are:

- religious magazines or newspapers. Check the back issues of any religious magazines and the editorial page of religious newspapers. People like Bill Coleman and Dolores Curran have written tremendous articles on everyday problems. And they've done it in articles which take three to four minutes to read.
- daily newspapers. I am especially impressed by Erma Bombeck and other writers like her who use light humor to make serious points. If you've read Erma Bombeck's column only on occasion you'll think that all her stuff is light, interesting but meaningless. Read her often and you'll find that about three percent is serious meditative stuff done in the same easy manner. Ask around among your friends and I'm sure you will find cut-out copies of columns like "The Kid's Worth a Bit of Mud," "The Child of Christmas," "Sometimes Love is Doing Things the Hard Way" or the story of God making a father.
- books expressing the author's philosophy. Just look on page 7 of "A Bag of Noodles" and you'll find a clear example of a meditation on commitment. And go to the appropriate library sections and try one that looks interesting.
- poems. There are hundreds of books on poetry. Try one once in awhile and save those which will make suitable meditations.

It takes a lot of work to find good meditations. It can be done by newspaper clipping of good things which catch your eye, copying poems or short essays as you come across them, and checking with a friend to see if they've read something which goes in with a theme. You will be amazed at how fast you collect potential meditation readings once you start looking and clipping.



Chapter 7
THE EUCHARIST



The main dish

The main dish is the eucharistic meal. Always! Please don't ever forget it.

This is really a very easy statement to make and I'm sure you really didn't expect to find anything else in the section, but . . . let's be honest with ourselves.

Even if you wouldn't say it out loud, do you really believe that presenting the gospel message is the most important thing?

Or

Even if you wouldn't say it out loud, do you really believe that a gimmick is the most important thing because that's what makes a children's liturgy different from a regular liturgy?

Or

Even if you wouldn't say it out loud, do you really believe that having a good time is the most important thing?

Or

Even if you wouldn't say it out loud, do you really believe that building community is the most important thing?

Or

Even if you wouldn't say it out loud, isn't it true that you haven't thought about the Eucharist for some time?

Do you fall into any of these categories? I'm confident that many good people do. Surely it isn't intentional. If you've lost sight of the importance of the Eucharist it's probably just one of those things that has been brought on by repetition or by deservedly increased emphasis on the gospel message and community building.

Would you say out loud that the Eucharist is not the most important part of the liturgy? I think not. Do you need to reflect and re-recognize that the Eucharist is the most important part of the liturgy? If so, please do it now. It is most important.

Now that we've been honest with ourselves and straightened out any problems that we've had with the importance of the Eucharist, let's continue with complete honesty and examine the attitude of children toward this important area.

Are you tempted to say that children can't understand the Liturgy of the Eucharist anyhow, so let's just minimize the time it takes to get through it?

Are you tempted to say that children completely understand the Liturgy of the Eucharist and I'm crazy if I even hint differently? (It's always easy to deal with extremes when it is obvious that the answer is somewhere between.)

Children's attitudes give them some advantages and disadvantages from adult attitudes.

It is to their disadvantage that they cannot fully appreciate the mysteries of the Eucharist with complete understanding. It is to their advantage that they don't feel the need to try.

It is to their disadvantage that they are so completely trusting of people. It is to their advantage that they are so completely trusting that they accept, without question, the statement, "This is the body of Jesus."

It is to their disadvantage that they are smaller than most people and can't always see what is going on. It is to their advantage when we recognize it.

It is to their disadvantage that their attention span is relatively short and sometimes they get bored or distracted during the Eucharistic prayers. It is to their advantage when we recognize it.

It is to their disadvantage when we feel that they are too immature to recognize the importance of the Eucharist.

It is to their disadvantage when we threaten them with punishment for bad behaviour or rewards for good behaviour during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

It is to their disadvantage when we don't show by example that God is present at this time; when we don't show by example that we recognize His presence; when we don't allow them to feel that presence.

It is to their advantage when we stress and make the Eucharist the main dish.

We have a two-fold responsibility in promoting the Eucharist as the main dish. Primarily, it is our responsibility to show this fact by our own example. Secondarily, and not even close in importance to our example, is our responsibility to create a comfortable and prayerful atmosphere. This requires: that we are sure the space is sufficient—40 kids in 10 square feet is trouble; that the kids can see the celebrant; that they can be comfortable—no cold or wet floors; that they can hear; that the lighting is right—even used to create an atmosphere; and that, if necessary, someone is prepared to *subtly* but firmly remove an unruly child.

The celebrant has the most awesome role in this responsibility of making the Eucharist the main dish. He must find the right mixture of informality and formality in prayer, comfortableness with and respect for the presence of God, and recognize not only the presence of God but the presence of the children. I do not envy this responsibility and I understand how a liturgy can physically drain the celebrant.

I wish I had the wisdom to explain how the celebrant can find the right mixture. I've seen the wrong mixture more often than the right one. Perhaps I can help by giving some examples of the wrong mixture:

1. The "let's get them out of here" attitude. This means that the celebrant chases the children back to their seats during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. For the right reasons this can be okay; when it is done to free the celebrant from the children, it is wrong.

2. The "if I hurry enough it won't be that bad" attitude. The record time of 2 minutes 43 seconds for saying the prayers from the "holy, holy" to "Lord, I am not worthy" was set by a priest not very good at children's liturgies.

3. The "I show the importance of what is going on by my exaggerated prayerfulness and change of voice" attitude. When prayerfulness is exaggerated it isn't effective. A significant voice change makes children wonder why Father changed his voice.

4. The "SHUT-UP and listen carefully because this is important" attitude. It's like saying that our most important priorities in order are: don't go to hell; love God.

5. The "t h i s i s s o i m p o r t a n t t h a t i t m u s t b e s a i d s l o w l y" attitude. No further comment.

As I said, it's easy to tell people how not to do it.

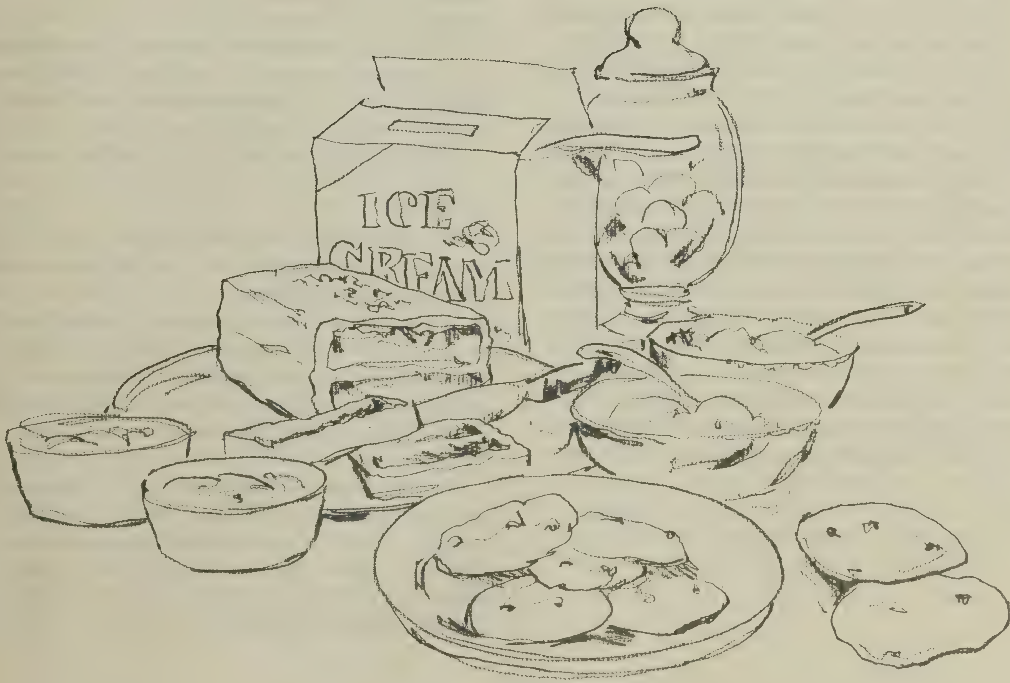
Okay celebrants, now go out there and do it with love. Love of God and love of kids and love of the opportunity to help bring them closer together. And let your love show—it will make up for any weaknesses in your presentation; it will be contagious; and it will leave you happily exhausted in the end.

And the children will be closer to God.

And so will you.



Chapter 8
REINFORCEMENT TAKE-HOMES



Desserts

A first reaction to "give them something to take home" is probably a scratching of the head and wondering what, or why, one would give people something to take home. Or, who would want to take something home. (Boy, is this ever background to make a point!)

Think a minute of Palm Sunday . . . who makes certain that the family gets Palm branches? The children, of course. And who does your scurrying to get the free calendars which "will be distributed after the Masses on Sunday"? Answer again, this time in unison, "the kids, of course."

Having made such a good case for the concept, following you will find some suggestions for some things you might give the children, or families, to take home from a liturgy. The criteria for giving them something to take home is that it must fit with the theme or be what they have just made themselves. Normally the "take home items" should reinforce the theme but occasionally they can be fun items, too. Like everything else, it certainly is not a must to give them something frequently—on occasion is sufficient.

Mother's Day

What comes to mind on Mother's Day? Flowers. Imagine each kid presenting his/her mother with a flower after the homily, or at the kiss of peace. The flowers can be made of paper if you need a practical solution but picture the beauty of real flowers.

If you have a controlled situation, like a liturgy for the entire families of a third-grade class, you might consider the children planting the flowers ahead of time for presentation on this day. (And don't limit this thought to Mother's Day.)

Cookies

The significance of this item is not to give everybody a cookie, but to tie an appropriate take home item into the theme.

If, for example, you chose the "Cookie Tree" by Jay Williams as a homily aid story, you surely will choose to prepare a tree with chocolate cookies hanging from it. At the end of the liturgy the children can be invited to share in the fruits of the tree.

If a bird is a central character in a homily story, such as "Tico and the Golden Wings" by Leo Lionni, consider a visual aid which later can be used as a piñata. Upon the bursting, the children can have a take-home item like wrapped hard candy or bubble gum.

Perhaps the title of this section should be "give them something at the end of the liturgy" since a cookie or piece of bubble gum certainly will not get home except inside someone.

Growing Things

Themes on hope, growing and Eucharist are natural opportunities to give seeds as reinforcement of the theme.

For example. Start with the purchase of wheat seeds (about 25¢ per million), 100 small paper cups and "baggies." Add a little dirt from the backyard to each cup. Put a few seeds in each "baggie" and tape the seeds to the cup. It is also fitting that you put a paper with simple directions inside the "baggie." Ask them for directions when you buy the wheat seeds. Finally transport the whole thing carefully and give one to each family at the end of the liturgy. I trust I need not mention that the celebrant must correlate the gospel message and the wheat seeds.

Wheat is ideal as a growing item. In addition to its obvious relationship to bread, it is a fast grower. With no care except a drop of water, families will have a visible reminder of the message in just a few days.

Wheat certainly isn't the only seed that can be used and you may not even provide the dirt. You could let people plant things outside. But, be aware that few people will do anything with a couple of loose seeds in their hands. If you want numerical response provide seeds, "baggies" and dirt. If you want a quality response tell them where to buy the wheat seed and where to find dirt. (I'd aim for quantity rather than quality in most situations of this type.)

Activity Items

Most of the time the children make something as a reinforcement to the theme, such as a craft in a classroom situation as described in "Beverages," they should expect to bring it home. This can even include something which has been used to decorate a banner. Simply invite them to pick it up after the liturgy. Don't go to extremes, however, and pick clean every banner; frequently the individual contribution is a piece of junk even though it is an integral part of the entire banner.

Examples of activity items are:

- A homemade pinwheel reinforcing the idea that the Spirit is like the wind.
- Imitation stained glass peace signs. There are so many Sundays where peace can be a theme and there are actually several peace signs that the youngsters will recognize such as the two

finger sign, the old upside down cross, a dove and bread and wine. Some explanation might be in order (maybe the explanation can come from the children) to explain each sign. To make an imitation stained glass peace sign, start with a cardboard square with an interior circle cut out (8-inch cardboard square, 6-inch circle is a reasonable size), adding a piece of colored tissue paper to the back of the circle and pasting a cardboard peace sign on the tissue. Placing the whole thing on a window gives the appearance of stained glass. (I really didn't intend to get into a discussion of craft ideas). Giving the children a choice of templates of the different peace signs will increase their enthusiasm and remembrance.

- For an Advent theme, start with an empty pint-size milk carton (this is a nuisance—they're easy to get from a school's trash but tough to clean); paint them brown and add a little snow, cut off one side, give one to each child and ask them what they see inside (some wise guy will say dried milk), ask them if what they see is what they're doing to get ready for Jesus' coming (I'm really only trying to give an example, not to put words in your mouth), have them add a piece of ribbon through a hole in the top and paste a nativity scene on the inside (you can get the nativity scene from those old Christmas cards you didn't throw away) and the kids have a Christmas decoration—and a reminder of what they should be doing to get ready for Jesus' birthday.
- Remember the scavenger hunt? It's another activity to take home an item.

Supplemental Activity Items

This used to mean that we gave the children a mimeographed picture and asked them to color it at home. (I hope we're able to provide something a little more sophisticated than this now.) This is an area where supplemental CCD books like "Joy" can provide much support. Simply be certain if you're giving out a supplemental activity item that it will catch the attention and interest. (This means, one more time, don't give them something simply to give them something.)

Seasonal Calendars

The countdown or sacrificial periods of Lent and Advent are especially suitable times for the distribution of calendars such as:

- Intricate Advent calendars with doors or pockets for each day each containing an appropriate picture or thought.

- A thought or suggestion for each day during Lent or Advent.
- A blank square which allows each calendar holder the opportunity to record what special thing they have done to get ready for Christmas or Easter.

Use of this third suggestion also allows the return of the completed calendar in an "ask them to bring something" category.

Other Theme Items

It is possible to find other forms of theme reminders other than cookies, growing or activity items. Such as—

Promotion items. Every so often, private enterprise—places like Dunkin' Donuts and Ginos—offer giveaway items suitable for a theme. (We once received a stack of crowns from Burger King which were given out at the end of a Christ the King liturgy.) If you explain your need, I'm confident that you will find a happy giver. And don't hesitate to ask for things which will fit with a liturgy later in the year rather than only for immediate needs.

Balloons are another easily available item loved by boys and girls which can be related to many themes. Be careful with balloons in church; although there have been many good experiences, there have also been some bad ones.

Or, if you've told the story of "Jerome," how about a stuffed frog? (A real one seems inappropriate, however exciting the idea.)

Is someone you know into ceramics . . . or clay?

Are other ideas starting in your head?

The area of other theme items is another opportunity to use the talents of someone or some family not interested in spending their lives working with children's liturgies but willing to go to the trouble to cut, stuff and sew 80 frogs.



Chapter 9
REVIEW & SUMMARY



Cleaning up

After every meal it is necessary to clear the table and do the dishes. After special meals one should also evaluate the meal and the way the guests were treated. Good cooks do this to determine strengths and weaknesses. Good cooks work on improving weaknesses and utilizing strengths.

So it must also be after a children's liturgy. There are two major responsibilities after every one:

1. Clean up. Physically go around and pick up every paper, straighten every chair, make sure any supplemental rooms are clean and locked up, etc. Failure to complete this nuisance item can end a program of children's liturgies.

2. Evaluate. Critically examine every item. Talk with people who will give honest opinions. Know whether the overall liturgy was successful, what parts were effective and what parts were weak. Determine the cause of the strengths and weaknesses. Examine the preparedness and "planning ahead" of all involved. ALWAYS TRY TO KEEP A PROPER **PERSPECTIVE.** Don't nitpick or speak critically to offenders.

It is difficult to end a discussion on evaluation in such a few words. I must trust your own common sense about how to evaluate and to work *with* people.

In this chapter I would also like to address some general items which will "clean-up" my thoughts.

Preparing Prayers

Most books on children's liturgies offer many prayer suggestions. There are opening prayers, rephrased scripture, prayers of the faithful, closing prayers and everything else. Use them if you want or, rather, if the celebrant wants. One of my criticisms of most works on children's liturgy is this overemphasis on the wording of prayers.

I am not downgrading the importance of prayer. It is my experience that a celebrant who can relate with children at a liturgy is more than capable of providing all the prayers. It is my suggestion that you let the celebrant worry about the prayers. I feel strongly about this for three reasons:

1. Prayers said by the celebrant are only as good as the way they are presented. A celebrant must be comfortable with any prayers. Reading your pre-written prayers will probably be less effective than his praying as he feels.

2. Time. Good prayer writing is a time consuming operation. Time which can be better spent preparing the other items for a liturgy. If you like and are good at preparing prayers, do it independently of team preparation for a children's liturgy. Otherwise, you'll find much team time spent worrying about specific phrases and wording.

3. Talent. If not the celebrant, the other books on children's liturgy present more prayer writing talent than you probably have. (Nothing personal; it's just that they have more experience than you and I.)

Checklists

Early in the preparation for a liturgy, there is a need to be sure that a responsible person or group know they are responsible for such things as:

☐ meeting with the celebrant,
☐ preparing a final outline for the celebrant,
☐ coordinating music,

□ typing, copying and distributing handouts,
□ cleaning up handouts,
□ bringing up offerings,
□ making, hanging and removing banners,
□ seeing that the children have something to sit on,
□ bringing an extension cord and media,
□ preparing and cleaning up supplemental rooms,
□ preparing advertising,
□ activities,
□ lectoring,
□ etcetera,
□ etcetera.

Carefully go through all the steps of the upcoming liturgy and be certain that the responsible person is clearly aware of that responsibility. And make sure there is a responsible person for every step. Never assume that "someone" will do it unless a responsible person is responsible for getting that someone.

(The word "responsible" appears 5 times in the last 51 words).

Advertising

You don't have a party without sending out invitations. Don't prepare a Eucharistic celebration without telling those you'd like to come. Carefully advertise.

Advertising can be done in the church bulletin, from the pulpit, in a short handout to the children in school and CCD classes and by placing visible posters around the church and the school halls.

In preparing advertising, take a lesson from what you've seen on billboards or television commercials. People remember that which is clever or a little different. Dull, straightforward statements like "There will be a children's liturgy next Sunday at noon in the hall" are not as well remembered as a catchy theme statement followed by time and place. Always be sure to include the time and place. (This last statement which is almost made tongue-in-cheek is added because time, date or place are missed an inordinate number of times.)

Handouts

I am a great believer in handouts. They can be used for:

Music. Unless music is available in some other form or the congregation absolutely knows the songs, the words must be given in printed form if congregational singing is expected. Music can be an appropriate item to start a handout. (Be certain to respect copyright laws.)

Promote Coming Attractions. This is another place to advertise. For example, include a short statement at the bottom of the handout such as:

COMING ATTRACTIONS (or is "celebrations" a better word?)

1. Christmas Children's Liturgy—5:00 P.M. Christmas Eve in the hall. Featuring: God's gifts to us, our gifts to our fellow persons (children particularly) and a children's choir (a large children's choir) singing carols. Ken Pivec, conductor.

2. January 2—Start the New Year and the Epiphany at the regular CHILDREN'S LITURGY at 12 noon in the hall.

Or, (example #2)

- Next Children's Liturgy will be December 19. Father Hirt, star storyteller of Hubert the Earthworm will be the celebrant.

- After that—Christmas Eve.
- After that—January 2nd.
- Seems like a busy schedule; hope we see you at a couple.
- Bring your friends.

or, (example #3)

The next Children's Liturgy will help celebrate the feast of Christ the King on November 21st (noon, hall). There are no important football games starting before 2P.M. that day. Father Kelmartin will be the celebrant.

Promote an Idea. If you're planning on collecting toys at Christmas, work on it as part of a handout.

For example,

Start early—e.g., in the beginning of November include on your handout:

Do you realize that it's November already?

Do you know that Christmas is a mere 48 days away?

Do you know that Advent is just around the corner?

Did you know that your generosity and sacrifices last year brought in 500 Christmas gifts for children who might otherwise not have received one?

Did you know that we intend to try that again at a Children's Liturgy at 5P.M. on Christmas Eve?

Do you know that we hope the money you use to buy these gifts for needy children will be the result of a sacrifice your family makes during Advent, e.g., no dessert or a meatless meal (with no substitute of course)?

Do you expect to hear more about this in the near future? You will.

Later follow with:

This Sunday is the last Sunday in the "B" year of readings. Next Sunday, the First Sunday of Advent, starts the year of "C" readings. It also starts the Advent Season—a time of getting ready with serious thought and some sacrifice for Christmas. If we could make a suggestion for family sacrifice—give up, with no substitute, the main course at the dinner table. This will allow everyone to participate in a giving or sacrifice. Then take the money you just saved and allow the kids to pick a game or toy that they'd like and bring that present to the Christmas Children's Liturgy so it can be given to someone who otherwise won't get a Christmas present.

Doing this and having the kids participate will greatly enhance your Christmas (even though you will be a little hungry the night you do it). (And no cheating either.)

At dinner tonight why not talk about a date for your Advent sacrifice—then mark it on the calendar.

Next chance, include the following as part of the handout:

- This is the Second Sunday of Advent.
- Christmas is three weeks away.
- We know some children who may not get a Christmas present unless you are kind enough to give it at the Christmas Children's Liturgy.
- Giving up desserts for a couple of nights can convert into money for a Christmas present.

- Hunger feels better when converted to a good cause.
- Did you mark your calendar yet for your Advent sacrifice?

And never give up:

STOP AND THINK A MINUTE—Are you aware that today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent (there are never 5 Sundays in Advent) and it is time to . . .

STOP AND THINK A MINUTE—You've been hustling and bustling getting ready for Christmas and the Fourth Sunday of Advent is a good time to take a minute and relax from all that rushing and worrying—or else it's a good time to . . .

STOP AND THINK A MINUTE—Because you haven't seriously thought about Christmas yet and the Fourth Sunday of Advent is a good time to realize that there isn't much time left. Or maybe it's time to . . .

STOP AND THINK A MINUTE—Have you done anything about a family sacrifice to convert that sacrifice into a Christmas gift for a needy child? Those gifts will be collected at the Offertory on Christmas Eve Children's Liturgy in the hall at 5P.M. So. . . . STOP AND THINK A MINUTE—of the pleasure that will be on the face of some child when he or she opens the gift you've provided. Make sure you note on the outside of the gift the age range and the sex of the child who should receive the gift.

And afterwards be sure to tell them what happened, e.g.:

As a result of your choice of making an Advent sacrifice, I had the pleasure of watching many handkerchiefs displayed when the Offertory gifts of children's games and toys were being brought up at the Christmas Children's Liturgy. (Before long I couldn't see the handkerchiefs though, because my own tears were in the way). Later that night I saw Mary ______ cry, too. When a woman who gives as much as Mary does is moved to tears because of the giving of our parish community, you can be sure that someone important said, "thank you." I'm also sure there were other grateful tears shed by the other people connected with receiving gifts through ______ Child Development Center, ____________ Orphanage, and Mary ______ Children's Fund. In the words of Mary, "God bless you."

Another example of an idea of promotion through notes on handouts is to try to stir a greater awareness of those around us at our community celebration. An idea of this kind can be promoted during intervals or continually by such messages as:

If you're reading these notes before Mass, why not take a minute and introduce yourself to those around you. After all, we are about to begin a *community* worship. We'll wait a second while you do it

. . . .

. . . There, even though you thought you'd feel a little awkward, don't you feel good about yourself, those around you, and the worship that is about to begin?

And, at another time:

- Did you say hello to the people around you?
- not just your own family either.

And at another time:

STOP AND THINK A MINUTE—Did you say something nice to those around you? There is still time before Mass starts (we hope)

And at another time:

The theme of today's liturgy is "Choices." We will be asked to examine the choices that we make throughout life.

Before Mass begins, how about examining one choice you can make now, i.e., either ignoring those around you or greeting and saying something nice to those around you—those with whom you are going to share this communal worship.

Get Help. There are two kinds of help that are needed: truthful evaluation and physical help. A handout can be used for these purposes, too. You can occasionally include a short note requesting help in general or for a specific task. You can also go all the way as in the following plea for help and survey:

For example, include a handout like this when trying to get some help:

DID YOU KNOW

We're getting ready to take a summer vacation. The last Children's Liturgy of this season will be celebrated on Pentecost, June 6th, at the regular time and place. We hope to see you there and again when Children's Liturgies reappear in September . . . speaking of September, (notice the slick lead-in) we'd be happy to have your help. "Help"—you think—"means a commitment for the rest of my life; I'm not willing to do that. If only there were a lesser commitment, then I'd be willing." Well folks, there is a lesser, but important commitment you can make. Look over the following list—if you see an appropriate line, check it. Include your name and telephone number and someone will contact you in a few months. If you have any comments, feel free to include them, too. If you'd rather make your comments personally, call Fred or Nancy Croft at . . . .

Wondering where to turn this in? There will be a box marked "Children's Liturgy" on the table in the back of the hall. Also, you can return it through one of the children in school and they will be collected in the classrooms.

I am willing to do the following for *one* liturgy:

__Help clean up afterwards (10 minutes).

__Come 20-30 minutes early and help set up.

__Our family (all or a portion) would like to bring up the Offertory gifts.

__I have splendid ideas, tell me a theme and I'll make an appropriate banner.

__I'm willing, but a little short of ideas, give me some direction and I'll make a banner.
__I've noticed the advertising posters a week ahead of time. I can do at least as well as you've been doing and would be willing to do that.

NOTICE: **Anyone willing to do any of the above or below more than once will also be considered.**

__I have a great idea for a liturgy (actually I saw it somewhere else) that I'd like to share.
__Even though I'm only a young person, I'm a pretty good reader and would like to do one of the readings sometime.
__You could hardly call me a young person, but I'd be willing to do a reading.
__Our baby will be ready for Baptism and we think it would be nice to include that at a liturgy.
________will be a First Communicant and we think it would be nice for him (her) to receive for the first time at one of these liturgies.
__I'm capable of leading one of the classroom groups during a liturgy (maybe I need some help with ideas). I prefer grade (circle one or more) K-1 2-3 4-5 6-9.
__Even though I'm capable of leading, I'd rather be a helper in a classroom group during a Children's Liturgy.
__I've heard some of the music at these liturgies; I'm at least that good (bad?) and maybe a little begging would get me to help.
__I play the guitar (drums) (recorder) (trumpet) (piano) (whatever) well enough to fit in with the parish musicians.
__I've seen one of the skits and can do at least as well as the people you picked. If you plan another, try me.
__I've noticed that you have handouts for CCD and the school. I can cut them and distribute them (if you tell me how many) to the teachers' boxes.
__I type and am willing to make a commitment to do you a little favor.
__You forgot me—I can't think of my talent, but I'm willing to try if you can suggest something I'd be comfortable with.
__You forgot me—I can ____________________
____

In signing this, I do it with the expectation that I will do this for one liturgy and do not expect to be hassled the rest of my life.
SIGNED ____________________
TELEPHONE NO. ____________________

SAVING THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR LAST

In looking over the past year we remember two things. Secondly, we remember our frustrations—the things that weren't planned properly, the music that didn't sound as well as it might have, the not having enough time—or too much time,etc. But first, before the frustrations, we remember your support. You came, despite what we did poorly, despite the fact that the time is not the most convenient, despite the fact that the place is not most conducive for worship. So we trust that this support means we are doing some things to make it easier for you and your children to worship God. Thank you very much and may God bless you.

And when you need to know how you're doing, include an evaluation. Following is an example:

"And the days dwindle down to a precious few" is a line from the "September Song." That's what we're starting to think about—only a few more Children's Liturgies before summer vacation—and September. We hope you can take a minute and influence our thinking and answer a few questions:

1. How frequently do you attend the Children's Liturgy?
   __We get to most of them.
   __Probably about half.
   __Only a couple.
   __This is my/our first.
2. How do you know when Children's Liturgies are scheduled?
   __We figured out that they are the first and third Sundays.
   __We see it in the bulletin.
   __We see the posters the week before.
   __From the irregular handouts at school and CCD.
   __We normally/occasionally go to noon Mass anyhow.
3. How do you feel about two Children's Liturgies a month?
   __Too often.
   __About right.
   __Not enough.
4. The format the *adults* like best is:
   __Kids taken to the classroom.
   __Kids up front.
   __We're satisfied with the mixture.
   the *Kids* prefer:
   __Kids taken to the classroom.
   __Kids up front.
   __We're satisfied with the mixture.
5. We have many more questions e.g., are these meaningful liturgies? are you comfortable with the form of worship? would you like more for the adults? are we too liberal? too conservative? 12 noon can be an inappropriate time—would some other time be more comfortable? etc.
   Could we have your comments?____________
   ____
   ____
6. Our ages are ______ (over 21 is quite adequate to describe adults)

Pencils are available on the seats (or on the floor). Please, (even pretty please with sugar on top), take an extra minute and answer these questions. Your response is *extremely* important because we find ourselves too close to be objective in our own evaluations.

NOTES



MY BEGINNING MASS BOOK
by Joann Marie Angers
Illustrated by Maryann Read

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"I learn about the life of Jesus
as I stand to hear the priest
read the good news - the Gospel.
There is a feeling of joy all around
when the words of Jesus are read.
At the end of the
GOSPEL
I join the parish family in saying,
'Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.' "



On the next set of pages, there is space for a picture of a priest and these explanatory words:

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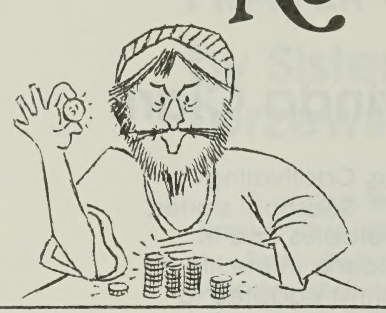
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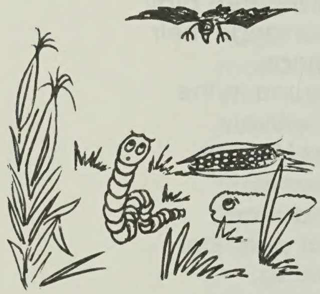
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